

THE
GOLDEN LAMP;
OR,
TRUTH IN LOVE
FOR
THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

“I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD: HE THAT FOLLOWETH ME SHALL NOT
WALK IN DARKNESS, BUT SHALL HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE.”

John viii. 12.

“Now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of the light.”

Ephesians v. 8.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works,
and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”—*Matthew v. 16.*—

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THE GOLDEN LAMP.

THE WORLD CREATED FOR MAN AND RUINED BY SIN.

THE marvels of God's wisdom and power are unfolded in creation; whether we consider the infinite glories of the heavens, or the varied beauties with which the earth teems, all alike are undeniable proofs of the skilfulness of His hands, and are the manifestation of consummate wisdom and almighty power. His eternal power and Godhead are thus so clearly seen, that all are left without excuse who do not bow down and worship Him who is the creator and sustainer of all things. (Rom. i. 19, 20.)

But the exceeding riches of His grace are, and can only be known in redemption; and here the exhibition of His love and wisdom and power are so surpassingly glorious, that the first creation, and everything connected with it, pales into comparative insignificance. The brighter glories of *grace* are unfolded, and we behold from first to last, in everything and in every way, the God of all *grace* working out from the profound depths of infinite wisdom, and the mighty ocean of divine love, the eternal purposes which He purposed in Christ Jesus.

God rested in blessed satisfaction when contemplating the first creation, as it shone forth in the unsullied freshness of living beauty, and pronounced it all "very good." He delighted in the work of His own hands, in the light and life, the fruit of His power; He surveyed the heavens above; He held converse on earth

with the man whom He had created in His own image, after His likeness; He listened as "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy;" and the goodness of everything above and around gave satisfaction to the living God.

Holy Scripture clearly and fully reveals what the earth was in its pristine glory and beauty, and God's purpose in creating it for man's abode and as man's inheritance, and as distinctly informs us that Adam by transgression fell from the lofty pinnacle on which he had been placed in stewardship to God, and as lord over the whole earth. By sinning he became ruined, helpless, wretched, lost and utterly undone. Disobedience to God's holy commandment marred and utterly spoiled God's work, and Satan, having ruined Adam and made him a slave, took possession of man's inheritance and thus became the god of this world.

With a ruined man and a blighted world, God's labour *seemed* to have been all in vain, and the great enemy of God and of the human race *seemed* to have triumphed. The fearful consequences of disobeying God's commandment are thus early seen, and when traced from its commencement in the human heart to its withering effect on creation, and its final judgment in the lake of fire, ah! who cannot see that it is indeed a terrible thing to sin against the Holy and the Just One, and that every transgression and disobedience must receive a just recompence of reward?

If God's purposes in producing a holy and happy creation appear to be foiled by the subtle craftiness and deadly hatred of Satan, yet God has infinite resources in His own grace, and having another purpose at heart He at once proceeds, according to the counsel of His own will, to work a work which shall be immutable and eternal, and which all the malice and efforts of devils and men will not be able to mar or hinder—a work in which God will manifest that He is "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders." "Dis-

cerning this by faith we can now exclaim—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out;" and triumphantly proclaim that "*grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*" Marvellous indeed is it to see that without yielding one atom of His holiness, or swerving one hair's breadth from His inflexible justice, God can deal with man in the richest grace, and bring him into a place of such glorious bliss as Adam in innocence never could have known, and which arch-angels in glory are incapable of entering into.

Such is our God; and He permits and invites us to search into "the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus." The dawn of His deep purposes of grace and glory breaks upon us in "the tabernacle."

A TABERNACLE FOR GOD IN A RUINED WORLD.

WHEN God "through a mighty hand, and by an outstretched arm" brought the people of Israel out of Egypt, and bare them on eagles' wings, and brought them to Himself—when He had brought every one of them safely through the Red Sea, and the wilderness was fairly open before them, "the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Speak unto the children of Israel that they bring me an offering; of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering. . . and let them make me a *sanctuary* that I may *dwell among them.*"

Here is an unfolding of God's grace, and an increased manifestation of His goodness of which hitherto there could have been no conception. God had walked with Adam in paradise—had made Himself known unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and given them exceeding great and precious promises, upon one occasion even

partaking of a feast which He permitted Abraham to provide for Him, but never had He given the most remote idea that He would come down and *dwell* among a people who were to be a "peculiar treasure" unto Him above all people.

To accomplish the redemption of the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage—from slavery under Pharaoh and from the dominion of sin—God made the provision required by His holiness, to bring a judged, a degraded, and wicked people nigh unto Himself: this could be done only *by death* . The death of the lamb, and the sprinkling of the blood, foreshadowed the death and shedding of the precious blood of "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world"—the Christ of God—the sinner's Substitute. Death must be executed upon the perfect and spotless One, that the sinful and lost ones might be saved and blessed. Israel must kill the lamb, Israel must sprinkle the blood: then Israel may shut to the door and wait in perfect security and profound serenity, while judgment is being executed upon the first-born of Egypt. Thus Israel learns how "mercy rejoiceth (or glorieth) over judgment," and *we* learn what a provision God has made in the gift of His Son, who has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

All the requirements of God's holiness being thus fully met through the death of the Substitute, way is now made for the outflowing of that love wherewith God loved His people. True, the gift of the lamb and the death of the lamb was also the fruit of God's love, but this was only a means to an end. While death delivered from the wrath of God, all who were so delivered were brought *nigh* to God. "That I may dwell among them" was the blessed announcement of Jehovah God, and although "the heaven of heavens" could not contain Him (1 Kings viii. 27), yet Israel is permitted and commissioned to make Him a sanctuary, a tabernacle for God's dwelling-place.

This building was to be provided by the love of His people for their God. Everything pertaining to it must be the free will offering of a loving heart; nothing given by constraint or of necessity could be accepted. It was not mere conscience saying—God has commanded, and I must do it. No—this would not satisfy the love of Him who had brought them nigh unto Himself to be His peculiar treasure. It was love in Him for them, that brought God down from the heaven of heavens to accomplish their deliverance. It was love, marvellous love, that devised life for them, through the death of a Substitute; and now that Israel is delivered, justified, sanctified, they are permitted to manifest *their* love for Him who so loved them.

The result of this appeal to their love was, that the people brought much more than enough for the service of the work, and proclamation had to be made throughout the camp, saying, “Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing; for the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.” (Exod. xxxiv. 5–7.)

How precious to see the influence of the love of God in the human heart—*love produced by God*. Every wise-hearted man endued with wisdom from on high was permitted to do the work for which God had fitted him; and every individual, without exception among the countless thousands of Israel, was allowed to bring a loving and acceptable offering to the Possessor of heaven and earth, who thus condescended to receive at their hands what their love enabled them to give. How precious for us also to see that *all* might lend a hand in providing and forming this tabernacle, that every single thing was to be made according to the divine direction; and that when all the varied materials were put together—formed, erected, and placed by God’s command—there was perfect uniformity, utility, and beauty, according to God’s order, for His own praise and

Israel's blessing and glory. Is it otherwise in the church of God?

The Tabernacle is in type and image, form and shadow, a representation of Christ. From the Ark and the mercy seat in the holiest of all to the outer gate of the tabernacle, all exhibits the blessed Christ of God, to the anointed eye and instructed mind: the Son of God in His divine nature as the mercy-seat upon the Ark—or the Christ of God, in His two-fold nature, God manifest in flesh—or the same ever blessed and most glorious person in union with His Church. Everything connected with the sanctuary or the priesthood, the holy mitre on Aaron's head, the precious gems on the breastplate, the censer in his hand, the pomegranates and bells on the hem of his robe—everything from the sockets in which the pillars of the sanctuary rested, to the taches and loops by which the curtains were suspended—from the altar of burnt-offering at the door of the tabernacle to the blood sprinkled before the mercy-seat and upon the mercy-seat—all, all speak to us of Christ; therefore it is most important that everything should be exactly placed in its adapted position.

God, who devised this wondrous structure, could alone impart the wisdom and supply the knowledge by which all should be formed and perfected according to the good pleasure of His will. Man's thoughts, man's wisdom, man's knowledge, in dealing with the things of God, or daring to transpose, or dispose anything contrary to God's direction, is the very height of presumption, and a proof of intense ignorance and folly. "The things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." (1 Cor. ii. 11-12.)

As this first tabernacle with its priesthood and service is presented to us as "the example and shadow of heavenly things"—"the patterns of things in the heavens"—and formed God's habitation in the wilderness, it

becomes intensely interesting to all Christians as an exhibition in type and shadow of the Church of God in its wilderness pilgrimage through this world, from the cross to the glory; and most fruitful and precious is the instruction it imparts to all who desire to be obedient children and to follow the Lord fully.

We read in Exodus xl. that as everything had been provided by God's direction, and supplied by the willing hands and the loving hearts of the Israel of God, so everything was erected and placed exactly as God had ordered. Immediately this was done, "a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle;" and "Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle:" and "the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys."

Thus God *took possession* of His sanctuary, and *abode* there. The love of His people had provided a dwelling place according to His own direction, and the Lord who "chose Zion, desired it for His habitation," and said, "This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it." (Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14.)

Who can speak or think adequately of the amazing grace of God thus manifested! Jehovah of hosts, the mighty God of the universe, before whom angels and archangels bow and worship as the holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, coming to dwell in the midst of a poor earthly people, just redeemed and brought out of Egypt into the wilderness, where *they* would but prove how ignorant they were of His grace, how utterly ungrateful and worthless they were in themselves. But God dealt with them not as they were in themselves, but as accepted and adopted, enriched and blessed in the Beloved. God dealt with them in Christ, redeemed them through His death, and sur-

rounded them with His merit, and supplied their every need by virtue of what Christ was. Apart from Christ, nothing but judgment could have befallen them; accepted in Him, nothing but blessing was their portion.

How slow the Christian is in learning this, all who are Christ's know too well; still most blessed is it to be assured that Christ is all and in all, and that it is only on the ground of what Christ has done, and what Christ is, that our gracious God bears with our manners in the wilderness. We are His witnesses that though, alas, sin aboundeth, yet grace doth much more abound!

Having taken up His abode in the tabernacle, God makes known His presence in the midst of Israel, not only by the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, to lead them by day and by night; but at once speaks to Moses out of the tabernacle, and gives him instructions as to how communion between Himself and the children of Israel is to be procured and maintained.

Here too the rich grace of our God is further displayed. As He had given permission to any and every Israelite to bring an offering according to his love and ability for the sanctuary of God; so now He makes full provision for every Israelite alike to draw nigh and have intercourse and communion with the God of his salvation, according to the state and condition of his heart and mind. He defines the nature and object of the various offerings, which will suffice to meet the need of the worshipping or the failing Israelite, and gratify and satisfy that precious God to whom he draws nigh.

All the Levitical offerings have this glorious object, to bring the worshipper near to God, to maintain him in that nearness, and to enrich and bless his soul with the revelation of the love and goodness, the grace and holiness of Him with whom the true worshipper has to do. But this is a theme which can now only be alluded to. The book of Leviticus, so full of hidden treasure

for the saints of God, must be searched and known, ere the full blessing of God's dwelling in the midst of His people can be realized. Enough perhaps has been said to induce the earnest Christian to search into "the things that are freely given to us of God."

THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."—HEB. iii. 1.

FIRST—What constitutes capacity for the High Priestly office?

Secondly—When did Christ enter thereon?

Thirdly—What functions does He perform and when will these cease?

First. In regard to capacity for High Priestly office. It is written, "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Heb. v. 4), whom God called, saying, "I have given your priest's office to you as a service of *gift*: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall surely be put to death."

Now "every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for *sins*: who can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way (wanderers), for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity; and by reason thereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins." (Heb. v. 1-3.) So Christ, seeing that the children were "partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." "In all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

“Christ glorified not Himself to be made an high priest,” but God glorified Him saying—“Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” (See Zech. vi. 12, 13.)

Christ was *fitted* for the office. “Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him; called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.” (See Heb. ii. 10–18.)

But it may be asked, why was not the Aaronic priesthood sufficient? Why was another priest needed after the similitude of Melchisedec?

This is fully answered in Hebrews vii. “There is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the *weakness* (through the flesh) and unprofitableness thereof; for the law made nothing perfect.” (See Heb. vii. 11–28.)

If then the Levitical priesthood was imperfect, in what differs the Melchisedec priesthood?

1. It is conducted by One who has won for Himself (yet who glorified not Himself thereto) the title.

2. By One who is chosen out from His brethren (Hebrew ii. 12–14), and who is touched with a feeling of their infirmities. (Heb. ii. 17, 18; iv. 14–16.)

3. By One who, though chosen from amongst His brethren, and One who has suffered, yet unlike earthly high priests, is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,” “without sin,” who “knew no sin.” *Such* a high priest becomes *us*. (See Heb. vii. 26–28.)

4. By One who is deathless, who is made “after the power of an endless life,”—who “ever liveth to make intercession.” One who, having been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and having entered

“with His own blood into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us,” *now lives for us*—“much more shall we be *saved* (preserved) by His life.”

Therefore Christ being raised from the dead, being holy and sinless, being like unto His brethren, being glorified of God, is a *fitting* High Priest for His brethren on earth.

The *second* clause of this enquiry is—*when* did Christ enter on His High Priestly office?

“Into the second (the Holiest of all) went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people; the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the Holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing” “But Christ being come a High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not of this building (creation), neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by *His own blood*, *He entered in once into the holy place*, having obtained eternal redemption.” “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God *for us* : nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world.” “But this man after He had offered *one sacrifice* for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.”

“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.”

From Leviticus xvi. 14, 15, we learn that the high priest could not enter the holy place without blood; and this is a “figure of the true.”

Blood signifies *death*; “for the life is in the blood.” Christ has entered into the holy place *with His own*

blood; therefore *after His death on Calvary*, as a sin-offering for the people (see Rom. viii. 34), "He hath ascended up on high; He hath led captivity captive and received gifts for men." "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place? *He that hath clean hands and a pure heart.*" Christ, the pure of heart and clean of hand, hath entered into the holy place, after bearing the sin of the world, now to appear in the presence of God *for us*.

"In all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the *sins* of the people: for in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." He could not be this merciful and faithful High Priest until *after He Himself had "suffered being tempted."*

Our "Great High Priest *that is passed into the heavens*" needeth not to offer again for *the sin* of His people; "for by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." "He appeared to put away *sin* by the sacrifice of Himself." "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son, *in the likeness* of sinful flesh, and (by a sacrifice) for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh;" for the flesh *hath been* crucified by the sentence of the law executed on Christ. (Gal. ii. 20.)

Now if the believer *has been* "forgiven all trespasses," *has been* saved, *has* passed from "death unto life," and if in God's sight, as risen with Christ from the dead, he *is* "complete in Him, *accepted* in the beloved," what need is there of the advocacy and priestly intercession of Christ on his behalf?

This brings us to the *third* clause of our enquiry, namely—What functions does Christ perform for us who believe, as our High Priest, and when will these unctions cease?

In John xii we find it written, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." Again, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John i.)

In Numbers xix we find mention is made of the "water of separation," viz., the ashes of the heifer mingled with living water. This was for *wilderness* uncleanness; a provision made by the Lord for cleansing those defiled during their wilderness journeyings. The heifer was to be burnt wholly—her skin, her flesh, her *blood*; the ashes to be mixed with living water, and the whole used as a "water of separation" (or sanctification) for sprinkling the unclean. The blood was to be burnt also: in other sacrifices the blood was poured out.

Does not this show forth the *one offering* applied by the power of the Spirit to the unclean conscience, which is thereby cleansed? May there not be somewhat of the same teaching in John xiii. 5, where after girding Himself, the Lord poured water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet. The *brazen* bason (or laver) contained the water for cleansing. It was on the *brazen* altar the sacrifice was slain, and so Jesus as the brazen altar endured the fire of God's wrath. The water in the bason seems to point out the action of the Holy Spirit connected with the finished work of Christ—for throughout the word generally the Spirit is denoted by water.

The point then I would seek to bring forth from these passages is, that the believer, though clean every whit, has need of feet-washing: and that this is performed through the washing of water by the word—through the action of the Holy Spirit, who taking of the things (the finished work) of Christ, applies it to our consciences, and thus cleanses us.

What action has the Lord Jesus Christ in this, as our Advocate, our High Priest, the Saviour of the body, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls?

As our High Priest who is passed into the heavens, He ever liveth to make intercession for us. He appears in the heavenlies as our federal Head, as our representative appearing in the presence of God for us, "as the Son over His own house," as our "High Priest over the house of God." He has the care of His people ever on His heart, and forasmuch as they are *in* the world though not of it, and being still in this earthly tabernacle, they are daily defiled and have *need* of constant cleansing, He by the power of His Spirit purgeth us through the living word, and restoreth our souls, over which sin has cast a cloud.

His priestly action for us *God-ward* is to present HIMSELF on our behalf, for He hath entered into the heavenlies *with His own blood*, to appear in the presence of God *for us*. "As *He is*, so are we in this world." We as believers are now under God, not as a judge, but as a Father. Our judgment for sin was settled on Calvary, and "there is no judgment to them that are in Christ Jesus." God as our Father judges and chastens us for sins committed as children; "for if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

"Judgment must begin at the house of God." "The Lord *will* judge His people." "We are chastened of the Lord that we should not be condemned with the world." Now, were it not for the blood speaking on our behalf—*ever speaking*—we could not *thus* be chastened, but *must* be condemned. Being, however, reconciled to God by the death of His Son, and preserved by His life—we, as sons of God, are under parental rule; and now, lest we should on account of sin be downcast, and think we were not saved, Christ as our High Priest ever cleanses—*ever* shows us by the Spirit HIMSELF—the Lamb slain—in

the presence of God for us: and thus while, showing us our safety, shows us also our delinquency, and we, *confessing*, are forgiven and cleansed. (1 John i. 6-10; ii. 1, 2.)

As the high priest of old went into the holiest with the blood, and returned to comfort waiting Israel with the tidings of the acceptance of the sacrifice, so doth Christ, our Melchisedec High Priest, ever stand with the blood, having our names on His breast, before God, and by His Spirit ever assures *us* of our perfect acceptance in Him by God.

“The atoning work is done,
 The victim's blood is shed,
 And Jesus now is gone
 His people's cause to plead:
 He stands in heaven their great High Priest,
 And bears their names upon His breast.”

When Christians shall be for ever with the Lord, there will be no more need of priestly intercession for them. They will be like Him (for they will see Him as He is)—glorified—incorruptible—one with Him—one in God. No shortcoming or delinquency then, for there shall in no wise enter into heaven “anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.”

“FEAR NOT, LITTLE FLOCK.”

HARK! a voice is speaking kind words, full of comfort, and rich in promise. “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, your loving Lord, in this His tender way of speaking, calls you His “little flock.” What a sweet name! and so simple that the unlearned cannot misunderstand it. It is a very proper name for *true* Christians. Truly they are a *little flock*; but they have a great and good Shepherd.

Therefore, "fear not, little flock." He is so good that He gave His life for the sheep; so great that all power is His in heaven and in earth—the "Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty."

Happy "little flock," you are loved with amazing love! Your Lover, although so great, so holy, speaks to you in the meekest, gentlest, and most affectionate manner. "I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." "I lay down my life for the sheep." "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love." "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." "These things I command you, that ye love one another."

These are some of the gracious words our adorable Lord addresses to His beloved "little flock." Perceive ye not how love is breathed out in every word? As you ponder over them, does not your soul enjoy the sweet sound of your Lover's voice, the inward glow of holy delight, the peace which passeth all understanding, the joy of the redeemed? Is not His presence felt? How delightful such moments of bliss, such real joy in communion with the Lord!

"Little flock," blessed are ye indeed! Loved with everlasting love! Love that existed before the foundation of the world, continues now, and will endure throughout eternity. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." "Little flock," it is your confession, and not another's, to say of your beloved Lord, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." "We love Him, because He first loved us," and we are waiting for the fulfilment of His promise, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

“Waiting,” *patiently* waiting for our Lord’s return, should ever be our position. The Holy Spirit instructed the Apostle Paul to write to the church, “The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the *patient waiting* for Christ.” “If we hope for that we see not, then do we *with patience wait* for it;” “*waiting* for the redemption of the body,” which will take place when Jesus comes again.

A great mystery was explained to the Apostle Paul. The Holy Spirit made known to him, a truth which had been hidden from the church. The time had come for it to be revealed, and Paul is instructed to write as follows: “Behold, I shew you a mystery, we shall not all sleep; but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.)

We are encouraged to look *not* for death, but for the *coming* of our adorable Lord to receive us unto Himself. The gracious Lord *has* directed some hearts “into the patient waiting for Christ;” and we know from happy experience that His direction is good, and adds much to our joy in the Lord. He is willing, we may be sure, to direct the whole of His beloved “little flock” into this “patient waiting for Christ,” if they will listen to His voice, and be directed by Him. Many follow the direction of men, and so are misled, and thus lose the comfort of waiting for Christ. When directed by the Lord, the “little flock” does not mistake death for the coming of her Lord. *Man* may term death the coming of the Lord; but *the Lord* does not. “Let God be true, and every man a liar.” The Lord shews us that death and His coming are two distinct events.

In the closing verses of the gospel by John, the Lord tells *Peter* “by what *death* he should glorify God.” But to Peter’s enquiry about *John*, He says, “*If I will* that he tarry *till I come*, what is that to

thee?" To the disciples the difference was so plain that they said that John would *not* die, and though they erred in *deciding* for him what the Lord only said *might be*, yet His words are surely sufficient to mark the distinction between dying and tarrying till He come.

Waiting "little flock," be of good comfort. It is the Lord who directs thee to wait, saying by the mouth of His servant, "Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." The "little flock" knows not *when* her beloved Lord will come, but she loves His word, she delights in His promise, she heeds His warning. "What I say unto you, I say unto all, *Watch.*" The "little flock" watches! For what should she watch? For death? *No*; but she is ready if death comes, and puts an end to her watching. It is for her loving Lord's return that the "little flock" should watch.

Beloved fellow-believer, is not thy watching profitable to thee? In watching for thy Lord, dost thou not find thyself watching against everything else? Yes, constant watching for thy adorable Lord has been good for thee; the discipline has been healthy for thy soul. Thou wouldest not have Him come and find thee entangled in this snare or that. The only safe position is following thy loving Lord's direction—"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when He will return from the wedding; that when He cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. *Blessed* are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching." (See Luke xii. 34-45.)

"Still, still, rest on the promise,
Cling, cling, fast to His word;
Wait, wait, if He should tarry,
We'll patiently wait for the Lord."

Watch then, "little flock;" your Lord counsels you

to watch, and pronounces those *blessed* who listen to and obey His word. Man may call you “*foolish*,” but Jesus calls you “*blessed*.” Who shall divert the purpose of the Lord? Whom the Lord blesses, they are blessed indeed. Remember Barak and Balaam. God put a word into Balaam’s mouth, and he uttered it. He could not do otherwise. He was sought by man to curse, but was used by God to bless. “God is not a man that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent; hath He said, and will He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold I have received commandment to bless; and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.” (Numbers xxiii. 19, 20.) “Fear not, little flock,” obey thy Lord and watch, for *in the act* of obedience thou art blessed. God says so.

Ponder over these two little words of your blessed Lord, “Fear not.” A life without fear! What a blessed existence! Your Lord would have you always rejoicing *in Him*. He knows full well, the timid, fearful feelings which you so often experience, and therefore supplies a most efficacious remedy, for every timid sheep of His “little flock” — “Fear not.” Little words, but full of meaning and power.

The Good Shepherd often spoke these words to His little flock when He was with them, “Be of good cheer; it is I, be not afraid,” *healed* their fearful hearts when “they cried out for fear,” as He walked upon the tempestuous sea, on a visit of love, to rescue His loved ones from the dangers of the storm. The Lord’s words soon cure Peter, and boldness takes the place of fear. He is actually walking on the boisterous sea. However, fear returns again. Peter forgets the Master’s advice, for we read, “He was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried, Lord, save me.” The loving Jesus immediately stretches forth His hand, and reprovably says, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” Had Peter obeyed His

Master's word, "Fear not," he would have found *it* as safe as the grasp of His hand. They are still on the water. What a wonderful sight! The blessed Jesus holding up the fearful Peter. The storm continues, but no harm can happen. *Jesus is there*; but when they are in the ship the wind ceases. JESUS is the Saviour, not the ship. Such an Almighty display of love and power causes the disciples to worship Him. They exclaim, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God."

How often now the Lord manifests Himself to His own "little flock" when a storm is raging! It may be sickness, or bereavement, or various trials. The loved one is tossed about sadly. Heavy are the clouds overhead; but in the midst of the storm One approaches with the comforting words, "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid." Then follows the sweet calm, the dutiful worship, the adoring praise, and the grateful utterance, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

With His disciples around Him, the night before He sealed His love for us with His own blood, He repeated the "Fear not." "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid," associating these words with the promise of His return.

On the first Lord's day after His resurrection, when the "little flock" had assembled with doors closed for "*fear* of the Jews," their loving Lord appears in their midst, and dispels their fears, saying, "*Peace* be unto you."

"Little flock," think much of thy Lord's "Fear not." It will be good for thee in life or in death, or if the Lord will that thou tarry till He come. All thy trials will soon be over. Thy future will be one of unclouded glory—a glory greater than that of angels. Listen to thy Lord: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." What a gift! Though now despised by the rich and great of the world, thou wilt soon become the possessor of the kingdom.

To attempt to describe the glory, beauty, and greatness of our kingdom would be utterly useless. It is beyond the grasp of our minds; but we have the glorious promises: “Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.” (Rev. v. 10.) “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” “Know ye not that we shall judge angels?” (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.) “They shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads;” “and they shall reign for ever and ever.” (Rev. xxii. 4, 5.) “That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us . . . and the glory which thou gavest me I have given them.”

With such realities in store we may surely “fear not.” Happy, happy people! “If God be for us, who can be against us?” “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, and ye are not your own?” “Ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” “I have called thee by thy name: thou art mine.” “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God;” “Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;” “Sons of God;” “More than conquerors;” “The Lord’s portion;” “God’s elect;” “loved;” and “precious.”

The day draws nigh, “little flock,” when the love thy Lord has for thee will be manifested to the world. Meanwhile, let us remember the words of our beloved Lord: “Ye are not of the world;” and again, “Be ye not conformed to the world.” Oh! that all the sheep and lambs of the “little flock” heeded the Good Shepherd’s voice! It is sad to observe so many believers loving the world and the things of the world. Such is the conformity to the world that it is impossible to distinguish the one from the other. No wonder, then, that so many are unhappy, without peace, and of doubtful mind.

May all the flock daily seek for grace, that each may exclaim with joyful delight, "FOR ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST!" ever remembering that yesterday's grace will not suffice for to-day.

May the utterance of our hearts be: Lord Jesus, our Good Shepherd, we, Thy "little flock," long for the time to arrive when we shall be assembled around Thy glorious Person, beholding Thee face to face, seeing Thee as Thou art, and ourselves made like unto Thee. We love Thy appearing, and are waiting for it, praying, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen."

JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY.

A CONTRAST.

WHAT is called "dispensational truth," though uninteresting to many, is often the key to the right apprehension of God's will with regard to our conduct.

It is necessary to "divide the word of truth" according to the age, circumstances, and people to which it applies.

The most important and prominent feature in this class of teaching is the relative position of the Jewish nation and the Church of God. The two systems or economies are described respectively in the writings of Moses and St. Paul.

Both Israel and the church were intended to occupy a corporate position in the world; but while Israel was eminently national and political, neither of these elements belong to the church. The bond that united and held together the Jewish nation was a common earthly parentage and country. The unity of the church arises from the common profession of eternal life in Christ, the indwelling of one Spirit, the sonship of a Father in heaven, and a home above.

Israel's position was to be maintained by acknowledging no relationship and holding no fellowship outside the wall of partition that separated them from

all other nations. That of the church is to be maintained by asserting with all the sweet graces of the Spirit that we are one with all saints of *every* nation, and admitting none as members of this communion but those who can call God their Father in truth.

Admission to the two circles corresponds with these leading features. A person became a member of Israel by natural birth into the family of Abraham. A person becomes a member of the church when he is "born again" into the family of God. Thus also circumcision followed the natural birth of the one, as baptism does the spiritual birth of the other.

Observe further: Israel was given a territory on the earth, and was expected by war and a strong hand to assert herself above all the nations of the earth, and to hold them in subjection. The church by contrast has not a foot of territory here below; a stranger and a pilgrim in a foreign land, she dwells in the midst of the enemy, and her inheritance is far out of sight. Her path among the people of the earth is one of meek humility, of submission to their reproaches and insults, while yet she seeks to make converts from among them to the love of her absent Lord. Her home is in heaven, and for heavenly glory with Christ she waits.

In a word, Israel's power in the world was to be physical; the church's is to be only moral.

But while their national position in the world forms the chief subject of the history of the Jewish people in the Old Testament, we find also an elaborate system of religion given, to be maintained in close connection with their civil and political economy. And here there seems at first sight to be some similarity between the Jewish and the Christian systems; so much so that some have confounded the two, and sought to make Christianity little more than a development of Judaism. But when closely compared we find that the differences and contrasts of the two religions are far more striking than their similarities.

The Jewish religion had two parts. First, obedience to the commandments of the law as a means to blessing; secondly, the ordinances and ceremonies of the Temple as a vehicle of their national access to and worship of God. Conformity with both these institutions was required of the Jew, just as he was in his natural state of depravity, no change of *heart* being demanded as necessary for his outward approach to God's dwelling place. The carnal, and unholy, and worldly were commanded to bring their offering to God, as well as the pious and devout. The commandments were given to men in the flesh and unregenerate. The result of all this was that with the great majority the ceremonies were empty and hollow forms,—the commandments of the law an intolerable burden.

In the church, however, things rest on a very different basis. Our religion consists also of two parts. The first, forgiveness of sins through the atoning blood of Christ (instead of the mere imperfect shadows of Leviticus); the second, the keeping of God's commands in the power of the Holy Spirit. The new birth brings the believer into eternal relationship with God, and makes service and worship the happy and loving outflow of a full heart.

We are not of the church until we are born again. God and we are in no covenant relationship whatever until our trespasses have been all forgiven through the precious blood of Christ. Contrast this with the Jewish religion. The unforgiven and unregenerate alike with the godly had access to all the privileges of the nation, provided only they could trace their genealogy to Abraham; and even the true saints among them had no certainty of forgiveness. With *them* obedience to the law was the *condition* on which national blessing depended; while with *us* obedience is the natural *effect* of gratitude for blessing unconditionally given. Their history proved that the law could only avail to destroy (Rom. vii.), and God has

mercifully *now* abolished that *old* covenant, and introduced the *new* covenant, which consists of unconditional grace to begin with, a new nature, and the indwelling Spirit as the power to obey, and obedience as the fruit springing forth spontaneously from every regenerated heart.

The ceremonies of their religion in like manner were made to suit their national standing as unregenerate men, and could be fulfilled without the moving of love in a single breast. The stringed instruments could be sweetly struck, the trumpets be loudly blown, a thousand victims could be slain, clouds of incense ascend, gorgeous robes be worn, and innumerable washings of the garments and the body be performed, all in strict accordance with the *letter* of the command, while not a single heart in Israel necessarily worshipped in spirit and in truth. A nation, not a church, was in question, and a national form of religion was what they required.

How different is the worship which the Father now seeks from His heaven-born family. Their music must be awakened by melody in the heart. Their temple must not be one made with hands, which hands may destroy, but one eternal in the heavens, where faith will introduce them to the very Presence itself. Their garments of glory and beauty are not the cunning workmanship of the weaver, but the perfections of Christ Himself, the righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ upon all them that believe; and their ornaments are meekness, gentleness, sobriety, and patience, with all the other fruits of the indwelling Spirit. Their offerings for propitiation are all concentrated in the one crucified and risen Lamb of God, and nothing less than their whole body presented as a living sacrifice do they esteem rich enough as an offering of thanksgiving.

In fact, all the forms and rites of the Jewish system were but temporary and passing shadows (suited to a passing and temporary dispensation) of those solid and

eternal realities which the Spirit has now revealed to us, and into which faith conducts all who believe.

It is true that many saints in Israel saw far beyond the shadow, and by strong, intelligent faith clothed the type with its divine significance, and thus offered acceptable worship, but in all such cases the higher privilege enjoyed was not secured by more strict observance of the ordinance. By reaching *beyond it* the substance was discerned, and the antitype more or less clearly apprehended, to the joy of the worshipper and the glory of God. Some of the contrasts between Jadaism and Christianity are thus pointed out in the hope that we may more clearly distinguish between things which so greatly differ.

THE TOIL AND TRIUMPH OF LOVE.

WHAT astonishing love, mercy, condescension, compassion, and patience shine forth in the wonderful salvation which Christ has wrought out for us! And what should *we* do with all that we are and have, but cast it down at the feet of Him who has redeemed us by His own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God?

He has purchased *everything* for us, without the least help from any one! *All, all* the product of free eternal love! From eternity we were chosen to all this blessedness; all most free to us, but what a price it cost our Lord! What could He give *more* than His life, His blood, His very self? Could love have been manifested in a more transcendent, glorious, and excellent way? What could He have done more than He has done?

Has He not made a noble conquest? He conquered by blood and death, yea, He slew death itself! He rode over hell and devils, and vanquished our strongest and bitterest foes! He led captivity captive by being

led captive Himself! He underwent shame, pain, and ignominy for us, and so gained boundless joy, glory, and renown. By dying He vanquished death, and "destroyed him that had the power of death."

The life, the blood of the Son of God, the life of the Lord of Life was laid down as a ransom for us, as the price of our eternal blessedness! Oh, the price—the price! Behold the Son of God shamed! Behold the Prince of Life in agony, bleeding, dying, even the shameful death of the cross! See the compassion of our blessed Lord Jesus, whose love was so strong that nothing could quench it. He laboured through love, sorrowed through love, wept through love, He died of love! And now He has made us one with Himself, put in *our* hands the palms of victory, put on *our* heads the crowns of conquerors, and finds His reward in our eternal joy! Yes, HE has done *all*, and *we* reap the fruit of it. HE has conquered, and *we* triumph in Him. HE has suffered, and *we* share His glory, as the purchase of His precious blood.

Thus we are justified, yea, cleansed from sin, and acquitted from all fear of wrath. And now His eyes are fixed on us, to watch over and bless, and keep us from harm. Every act of His, every word, manifests a love ever to be admired, and yet never understood in its heights and depths! O hear Him say, "I have loved you with an eternal love, washed you when polluted in your sins, and made you kings and priests unto my God and your God. I loved you when vile and abominable, and now I have made you fair and spotless, yea, perfect through my comeliness, which I have put upon you. You are the fruit of my sufferings and toil, my tears and groans, my shame and reproach, and now in *you* I see the travail of my soul, and am satisfied. I have redeemed you from eternal wrath, and purchased all things for you; and *now* I will cast out the enemy from within you, and will say, 'Destroy them.'"

Are we not blessed, eternally blessed, to whom such words are spoken? Should we not be overjoyed because of the Bridegroom's voice? No wonder it was said of Him, "Never man spake like this man." Has He not brought us into the most intimate fellowship with Himself, and called us to drink of the river of His pleasures? *We* reap the fruit of His groans and tears, afflictions, and labours, and He joys in our joy, and delights in our comfort! And *soon* the day will dawn when the topmost stone will be put on the glorious temple which the Lord is building for Himself; a temple formed of living stones, each stone hewn out of nature's quarry, and quickened into life and glory; each indwelt by the Spirit of God, and carved and polished by His skilful hand. *Then* the desires of His soul will be fully accomplished, His joy will be complete, His reward full, and He will drink with us of the new wine of the kingdom which He has called us to enjoy.

And now while we are still in this world of sin and woe, this time of our betrothal, while we are waiting for the nuptial day, what shall we do, and how shall we act? Shall we not seek to yield ourselves a living sacrifice to Him who has done so much for us, and loved us with such amazing love?

"His be the Victor's name,
Who fought our fight alone;
Triumphant saints no honour claim,
The conquest was His own.

"He hell in hell laid low,
Made sin, He sin o'erthrew;
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,
And death by dying slew!

"Bless, bless the Conqueror slain!
Slain by His own decree;
Who lived, who died, who lives again,
For thee, His saint, for thee."

HEPHZIBAH: GOD'S DELIGHT IN HIS PEOPLE.

Is. lxiii. 4.

DEAR fellow-believers in Christ, how infinitely precious are the thoughts of our God towards us—how great is the sum of them! And as we pass on through life, from one year into another, it is well for our hearts to call to remembrance those love-tokens of grace—the *names* which the Lord has condescended to give to those who are His. How deep their significance, and how exceedingly precious their import, and how calculated to become the source of power for service to those that enter into them!

Such is the name "HEPHZIBAH" (*My delight is in her*), which shall in the latter day be stamped on the brow of repentant and restored Israel, and which is now written by the finger of God on those who stand espoused "as a chaste virgin to Christ."

Of all glories none is higher than to be the delight of God. It was this special glory that surrounded the blessed Lord, when, as the obedient Son and faithful Servant, He met the full desire of the heart of God, and received once and again that audible witness from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

To see Jesus the delight of God, who had Himself "delighted always before Him," excites no surprise—it could not be otherwise. But when "Hephzibah" is written on the brow of poor, fallen, sinful man—on one born in sin and shapen in iniquity—how wonderful the efficacy of that provision which, having washed out the leopard-spots of sin, presents the washed and pardoned one, so divinely, so absolutely perfect, that God Himself can take delight in him!

The provision for this we know is CHRIST—the Holy One of God—in whom all who believe are presented, "justified from all things," and invested with the

righteousness of God, so as to stand complete before Him in whose eyes the heavens are not clean, and who charges His angels with folly. Not less complete and perfect stands the feeblest child of God, for the small and great stand alike "complete in Him."

Thus God begins with us. He takes us up into the glory, and then sends us back into the world, that we may shew forth what we have heard, and shine in the glory that has shined upon us. And thus abiding in HIM, into whom we have been grafted, we may realise in our daily life what it is indeed to be the delight of Him who has called us to be conformed to the image of His Son.

But while we know our standing in Christ, and the grace that has set us there, do we know the promised power that fulfils the good purpose of the will of God? While there is provision in the precious blood of Christ to meet all sin, there is *also* provision in the Holy Spirit to meet all weakness, enabling the child to say, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me;" for "the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

It is no longer a question with such an one as to what *he is*. It is entirely a question of what *Christ is*, and that not as an abstraction. *He is*, now and ever to him who believes, alike the Beginner and the Finisher. What therefore doth hinder? What stands in the way of our realization? Surely *faith* should be a *realization*, unless that on which faith rests makes ashamed!

We know somewhat of the promises of God, we know moreover that He is faithful; for sooner shall heaven and earth fail than one of His promises fall to the ground; and yet practically what complete failure are we conscious of—in ourselves as well as in others.

It is *this* we are called upon to remedy, and the remedy is alike simple and difficult. *Simple* so that a child may grasp it, who in confiding love has learnt to

rely on the wisdom, grace, and power of another; and *difficult*, oh, how hard to that old Adam self-will, that would ever trust itself rather than God, and cling to the *seen* rather than the "*unseen*."

John xv. reveals to us the mystery, and tells us the reason of all the broken expectations and unrealized blessings that strew the path of so many a child of God. Abiding in Him, and having Him abiding in us, is the secret of all reality in the things of God.

Still His love changes not, and the covenant of His grace abides for ever sure, and in it He has made provision for all our failure, and He has so taken it all into account that the covenant has been ordered to meet every contingency.

It was this that gave the bright rays of glory to David's last words (2 Sam. xxiv. 5), where, notwithstanding the twice-repeated "although," and the bitter reflection that "his house" had not stood in faithfulness to God, he was still able to say with exultation, looking forward to the morning without clouds, "YET hath He made with me an everlasting covenant." And amidst all home-failure and heart-failure, he could look to that and say, "This is all my salvation and all my desire." "Hephzibah" remained to him in the eternal counsel still, and on this he was able to rest his soul in sure and certain hope; knowing that resurrection would be the eternal realization of all he had hoped and of all he had believed.

But while "Hephzibah," as spoken by God, gives a present assurance to the believer in reference to himself, it throws a halo of glory around *every* child of God, and he learns to take up the words of the Psalm—"to the saints (*i.e.*, holy ones) that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." Why? Because God's delight is in them, and He has surnamed each one "Hephzibah;" and as having the mind of God, we can say "Hephzibah" too—not as they shall

be in the future glory only, but as they are in the earth even now to *faith*; nay, more, as they are even now to *love*.

We must all have been struck at the divine satisfaction manifested oftentimes in the intercourse of our blessed Lord with His disciples, notwithstanding the many reproofs He had to administer. His heart burned with love, and every spark of love in their hearts found a home in His bosom, a heavenly welcome, that could not but communicate the joy it received.

If loneliness marked His path, it was not that He sought it. He came to *communicate*, He came to give *Himself*, and He came to receive unto Himself, yea, to give a place on His bosom to every one who would lie there. Yet ever willing to *receive*, He took the disciples into the fellowship of His greatest glory, as seen on earth on the mount of transfiguration, and of His greatest agony, as seen in the garden of Gethsemane. He sought sharers of His joys and of His sorrows, and though sleep and not sympathy marked the result, we learn what *He* sought and was willing in condescending love to receive. Yes, to receive, as when He said to the fallen woman of Samaria, "Give me to drink."

When love—His love—is perfected, there is this response, and He reaps as He sows. Alas, as yet how far is it otherwise! And how much in our unyielding hearts is there of the stony or thorny ground, and hence what might be a hundredfold becomes sixty, and sixty often becomes thirty, and thirty becomes, alas! perhaps—what?

The joy of the Lord in His disciples gives an especial charm to the record of the intercourse of the high and lofty One (whose place was to inhabit eternity) with His feeble followers. But more than this, for while they never forgot He was Lord and Master, yet His delight in them stamped on their hearts the deep consciousness that He was as their own "familiar friend,"

for He thought of them as men who were His fellows, His "equals," and so would He have them feel towards Him. We may well ponder His lament over Judas in Psalm lv. 12-14, where he says, "But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and my acquaintance."

He also carries this same blessed thought into the presence of God and tells the Father what they had been to Him. And, oh, how graciously does He describe them! "They have kept Thy word." "They have known surely that I came out from Thee." "They have believed that Thou didst send me." All this and more does the blessed Jesus assert in His prayer to the Father regarding those whom He was so soon to leave. Their wilfulness, their ignorance, their unbelief, all seems forgiven and forgotten; and here they are presented to the Father as the heart of the loving Master delighted to regard them.

Now for a recompence in the same, let us take a pattern of the grace of God from our great Exemplar, and so regard each other as He regards us, that from our heart we may say, "Hephzibah" to every fellow-member of the body of Christ. In the deep joy of what we are to God, let us measure one another with the measure wherewith God has measured us; for with what measure we mete it shall be measured to us again.

In John xvii. the Lord prays for His people as a *given* people—given by the Father—and as THE FATHER'S gift they have their value. As we are given to Christ even so are we given to one another, and our appreciation of each other will be in proportion as we appreciate HIM who gave us to one another.

"Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me," said Jesus, and so in our measure should we each learn to say; and this truth once realized would give to our thoughts about the church of God a direction the very opposite of that which, in the narrowness of our own hearts, we are disposed to give.

How prone are we to seek out defects in the people of God, to magnify their shortcomings, and make much of our differences. Alas! this cometh not from Him that hath called us. We have not learned these lessons in the school of the great Advocate of the church; we have rather been sitting at the feet of the accuser of the brethren and learning of him, practically forgetting altogether what the blood of Christ has done alike for them and for us.

Henceforth may we be better able to maintain the fellowship of saints in the power of that name that has been named upon us, and walk at liberty in the land of Beulah, under the shelter of the eternal covenant, to the glory of our God and Father, and to the increased comfort and joy of the heavenly family of which we are members. So be it. Amen.

STRENGTH MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS.

2 COR. xii. 9.

“THE Lord gave Paul at starting what brought his own energy to a close. It was as if He had said, ‘Paul, I am going to use you a good deal down here; but before I can do this I must first bring you into a condition of cripplement, in which you will feel that you cannot do without me, and which will make it plain to all that it is *I who do the work, not you.* It is for this end that I send you a thorn in the flesh. Do not ask me to take it away. I will do what is far better for you, and more glorifying to me: I will cause my power to rest upon you, and perfect my strength in your weakness.’

Not only do we need the Lord to give us eternal life, but we need Him to guide us all the way through. He has never promised that we shall be exempt from trial and circumstances of difficulty. What He intends is that we should turn to Him in the trial, and learn that our resources are in Him, not in ourselves. All

the trials of the wilderness, the rough places of the way, instead of discouraging us, should be welcomed as opportunities of proving the exceeding greatness of the power treasured up for our use in a risen, living Lord to meet us in them, and raise us above them.

It is with the Lord of resurrection that we have to do. The daily petty annoyances and vexations we meet with are permitted to spring up, like thorns in our path, to exercise our minds and put us to the test whether we will turn to Him in them, and prove the sufficiency of His grace, enduring as seeing Him who is invisible, or just walk by sight as other men."

"IMMANUEL; GOD WITH US."

SINAI AND BETHLEHEM.

THE contrast between the coming down from heaven of the mighty God to the children of Israel, described in Exod. xix., and the coming into the world of the same blessed Person as seen in Luke's gospel (chap. ii.) is very striking.

At Sinai His presence was announced by "the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words." The thunders, the lightnings, the thick clouds, the quaking and smoking mount were witnesses to the terrible majesty of Him, who came from heaven to seek the welfare of and impart His blessing to a people whom He had redeemed as His peculiar treasure.

God's *power* had been manifested in Egypt. The sore plagues wherewith the Egyptians were visited, ending in the death of all the first-born, and subsequently in the utter destruction of Pharaoh and his warriors in the Red Sea, were witnesses of that power.

God's *actings for* Israel's deliverance, and *against* their enemies, were well known to His people. His provision also for their daily sustenance in the manna

from above, and in the flowing rivers from the smitten rock, were exhibitions of His care and love. They had seen some of His mighty acts, but were now called to know His holy and His glorious presence with them.

“And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice;” and so terrible was that sight, so awe-inspiring was that voice, that all the people in the camp trembled, and even Moses said—“I exceedingly fear and quake.” God’s holy presence realized, without the full knowledge of His grace, must appal the stoutest heart, and cause the haughtiest spirit to quail.

How contrasted to this revelation of His majesty and power are the scenes described in the second chapter of Luke’s gospel.

Shepherds are keeping watch over their flocks by night, when lo, the darkness is suddenly dispersed, and the glory of the Lord shines round about. The silence of midnight is broken by the angel’s voice, declaring unto the shepherds “good tidings of great joy.” “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

If the golden bells on the high priest’s garment sounded sweetly in the ears of the outside worshippers, bringing the assurance that the high priest was alive in God’s holy presence, and was occupied about their business, oh, what ravishing melody is there in the angelic message to the poor needy sinner—that God HIMSELF had come down into this world as the anointed Saviour, and was to be found wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger at Bethlehem!

The sinner needs a Saviour; the Saviour wants the sinner. The whole world having departed from the living God, and every human being having become exceeding sinful, all are now called to behold the grace of God in the Saviour thus announced, and to see “God manifest in flesh” come down from above, in

pursuit of the straying ones; and occupying a place in the world where all who seek may find Him.

Scarcely had the angel's voice uttered the "good tidings of great joy," when suddenly there was with him "a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." The wondrous testimony of the first angel appears to attract and gather the heavenly host, and the glory of our gracious God is chanted in heavenly strains. Heaven and earth hear and echo and re-echo the glad tidings of great joy, that God's Son has descended from the throne of His glory, to dwell amongst men; and for a time at least the earth becomes the dwelling-place of the most High God.

Never had grace been so displayed, never before had angel tongues uttered such praises. The invisible God is thus manifested as among men, unaccompanied by the appalling terrors and glories of Sinai. No sounding trumpet strikes terror into the heart; no quaking earth or crashing thunders, no scorching lightnings or other accompaniments of divine majesty, but in the gentleness of a little babe, and in the lowliness of a manger, men are called in richest grace *there* to behold their God!

The presence of God had been witnessed by Israel in the pillar of cloud and of fire; the holy priesthood had communed with the Holy One inside the tabernacle in the wilderness; Solomon's temple had been the abode of the Most High when Israel obtained possession of the promised land; but alas! whether in the tabernacle or in the temple, God was grieved, dishonoured, disowned, until He could no longer endure the rebellion and wickedness of His people, and He finally took His departure from among them and ascended into heaven again.

How deeply affecting to the renewed heart is it to witness God's departure from the midst of His people.

In Ezekiel x. we see the glory of God above the heads of the cherubim, and the cloud filling the inner court. "Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub and stood over *the threshold* of the house, and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the LORD's glory." The cherubim are then described; and in verse 18 it is written, "Then the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim." And in the following chapter, "Then the cherubim lift up their wings and the wheels beside them: and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above, and the glory of the Lord went up from the *midst of the city*, and stood upon *the mountain* on the east side of the city."

The glory had removed from its usual place in the house to the threshold, from the threshold into the midst of the city; thence to the mountain on the east side of the city, from which it appears to have gone up into heaven.

The lingering love of God to His people, and His unwillingness to depart from amongst them, is most evident. Step by step He recedes farther and farther from Israel, waiting after every step to see if there were any kindlings of repentance, any contrition, any humiliation, any desire to return unto God, that His absence from them might be averted.

We may well pause and consider how like this was to our precious Lord, when here among men. He went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves." "And when He was come near He beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they

are hid from thine eyes." Again, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; for I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

But the climax of His love and the wickedness of His people was yet to come. They cast Him out of the city! He suffered without the gate, and after His death and resurrection He ascended up from that very Mount of Olives where the glory had tarried, and from whence it had ascended so many centuries before.

The babe at Bethlehem is God's Son. He is God manifest in the flesh. He came down to seek and to save the lost. He tabernacles in human form. He dwells amongst men. Surely *all* will receive, *all* will welcome, *all* worship and adore and obey Him, who will manifest Himself as the image of the invisible God, the brightness of God's glory!

Alas! how contrary to this natural expectation everything proved.

A *few* wise men from the east were indeed led by God's star to God's Son, worshipped Him, and poured out at His feet their treasures of gold and frankincense and myrrh. A *few* shepherds also who heard the angel's message, and were enraptured with the angels' songs, said one to another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see the thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger." The shepherds spoke of Him to others, and returned to their occupation, "glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen."

Simeon also, an aged servant of the Lord in the temple, received the young child from His mother's breast, and took Him up in his arms and blessed God

for this inestimably precious gift. He carried in his arms the Prince of Peace, whose value and virtues gave the peace of God to Simeon's soul, and delivered him from all fear of the future. He gazed upon the infant Jesus. His eyes beheld, his hands handled God's Saviour, and his soul received God's salvation. Now he could depart in peace. He had got the Christ of God, and could pray as he had never prayed—"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."

Coming in at that moment, Anna, the prophetess, who for years had been waiting for this gift of God, beholding HIM, at once gives thanks unto the Lord, and speaks of Him to all that looked for redemption in Israel.

Marvellous fact of God's grace! wonderful provision of His love! The glad tidings that Christ the Lamb of God is come spread from one to another. If He is received, eternal life is at once possessed by the receiver. If He is rejected, the one who rejects, disowns, or neglects, abides in death, and has to answer to God, not only for his own personal sins and condition, but also for the crime of crimes—the rejection of God's salvation and God's Son.

While a very few were influenced by divine grace and received Christ, the vast multitude refused Him. Kings, priests, rulers, scribes, Pharisees, men of every grade and character agreed in this one thing—they despised, they scorned, they rejected the Son of God, and would not accept salvation from the only Saviour of the lost.

Thus was the surpassing grace of God met! Instead of *all* receiving, *almost* all rejected Him. There could be no plea of ignorance. The Spirit of God had predicted, the angels had announced Him; the wise men from the east had worshipped, holy men and women in the temple had acknowledged Him. Nothing had been lacking on God's part to assure His Son a welcome to the hearts of His people, for their homage and worship; but, alas! the god of this world had

blinded the eyes of those who believed not, and the whole nation, with the exception of a very small remnant, utterly refused to acknowledge and accept the Son and Saviour whom God in His grace had sent to them.

Here for the present we must leave the history of the virgin's Child—the Son of God—Immanuel—God with us. The Child is born; the Son is given; the government shall be upon His shoulder. His name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. However men have rejected or may reject Him, His people know “that of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end.”

Great and glorious as was the grace of God in sending His Son into the world—marvellous as was the love of the Lord Himself in that He did not abhor the virgin's womb, nor refuse the position assigned to Him among the very poorest of the poor—yet these are but the beginnings of the wonderful things unfolded to us for God's glory and our blessing.

God indeed came down and dwelt among men, and believers can say, “We beheld His glory—the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Happy they who thus know Him, whom to know is life eternal. Happy, most happy, they who now daily take up their cross and follow Him.

THE WIDOW'S POT OF OIL.

2 KINGS iv. 1-7.

LITTLE did that poor widow know what she possessed when she told Elisha, “Thine handmaid hath not anything in the house save a pot of oil.” But soon, with her door shut, she receives from that pot of oil enough to pay her debt, and enough to live upon besides.

Are not we often inclined, like this woman, to think that Jesus is *not enough*, that we must have *something*

more? But let us shut to our door and try. Let us present our empty vessels and wait, and see if the riches of His grace will not freely flow and meet all our need—not only supplying *pardon* for the past, but *strength*, yea, all that we require for life's journey.

He is able to make all grace abound to us, that we may abound to every good work.

“To Him we ne'er can come in vain,
How deep soe'er our need
He freely gives us all, and more
Than that for which we plead.

“But best of all, He, He Himself,
His people's portion is!
And through eternal years of joy,
He'll own them still as *His*.”

JESUS THE TRUE NAZARITE.

Read Numbers vi.

THE Lord Jesus was the only *perfect* Nazarite. His separation to God was complete. His whole life on this earth was one voluntary surrender of *self*, in which He gave up His rightful glory, and became the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

Truly He kept Himself from wine and strong drink. (We do not speak of literal wine, but of wine in its figurative meaning, as typified by the Nazarite's vow.) What ineffable joy and gladness had been His eternal portion in His Father's bosom; but He vowed the vow of the Nazarite, and voluntarily gave it up for a season for the great love wherewith He loved *us*. Nor did He drink “vinegar.” There was no asceticism in Him; no harshness; no sternness.

“For ever on His burdened heart
A weight of sorrow hung;
Yet no ungentle murmuring word
Escaped His silent tongue.”

Love—deep, true, self-sacrificing love—shone out in His every word and act. He stood out as *the separated*

one—separated “unto the Lord,” to meet the requirements of God’s holiness, to “magnify the law and make it honourable”—“undefiled, separate from sinners,” and yet continually mingling with sinners, that He might minister to them out of His own abundant fullness.

“No razor” came “upon *His* head.” (ver. 5.) Nothing *could* mar the beauty of His life and ways. The wickedness around, which in all other cases produces evil of some sort or other, only drew forth *His* perfections. The temptations and sorrows which came upon Him only proved His inherent holiness. Verily the locks of His hair grew long, and the beauty of holiness was fully manifested in Him.

Not all the scorn and ignominy which was heaped upon Him, by the very sinners whom He came to save, could turn Him from His purpose; but in the perfection of meekness He gave His “back to the smiters,” and His “cheeks to them that plucked off the hair,” and hid not His “face from shame and spitting.”

We learn a little of how keenly He felt these things by such words as, “Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness;” “The abjects gathered themselves together against me;” “and I am the song of the drunkards.” But still He shrank not back.

Nor could He be turned aside by the unbelief and hardness of heart of His disciples. Even this drew forth the exquisite tenderness of His love, and proved Him as the One who was full of compassion.

Those touching words—“Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?” and again, “What! could ye not watch with me one hour?” prove how sorely He was grieved by their carelessness and indifference, but gloriously indeed did He fulfil the type that “no razor” should come “upon His head.” The fruits of the Spirit ever abounded in Him, and none of these things could spoil the perfect evenness of His ways, or rob Him of those spiritual

tresses which were the natural adornment of His perfect heart. Well may we sing of Him—

“What wondrous cause could move Thy heart
To take on Thee our curse and smart,
Well knowing we should ever be
So cold, so negligent of Thee?”

“The cause was love! We sink with shame
Before our sacred Jesus’ name,
That He should bleed and suffer thus,
Because—because He loved us!”

“All the days of His separation He *was* holy unto the Lord.” He would not, He could not defile Himself. All the efforts of the devil to make Him swerve from His path of voluntary obedience were in vain—He could neither be allured nor deceived. The law of His God was in His heart, and His meat and His drink was to do His will. No suffering could shake His purpose: He set His “face like a flint,” and was “*not* ashamed.” No difficulty could deter; He was firm and immoveable; His heart was “fixed,” and “faithfulness” was the “girdle of His reins.” Verily He swore to His own hurt, and changed not. (See Psalm xv. 4.)

There was no accidental contact with death. No unwitting defilement; no overtake or failure in any relationship. (ver. 6–9.) All was perfect and complete. No “days lost;” but His *whole* life ascended as a “sacrifice, acceptable, well-pleasing, to God,” an “odour of a sweet smell.”

At the end of His course we hear Him say to His Father—“I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.” The days of His separation were “fulfilled,” and then, according to the vow which He had taken upon Himself, He voluntarily came in contact with death, and took us up, “dead in trespasses and sins,” as we were, and gave HIMSELF as the sacrifice for our sins.

Then, in a certain sense, that holy head was “defiled.” Of His own free will He took our sins upon

Himself, and bare them in His own body on the tree. Yea, He was made sin for us.

O how that spotless One shrank from this close contact with sin! How loathsome and abhorrent was it to His holy soul! We hear Him groan in His agony—"Mine iniquities are gone over mine head, as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me." "I sink in deep mire where there is no standing; I am come into deep waters where the water-floods overflow me." "Thy fierce wrath goeth over me." "While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted."

IN HIMSELF, He was still the Lamb without blemish and without spot; the holy, harmless, and undefiled—God's perfect joy—God's one delight—the burnt-offering as well as the sin-offering, a sweet savour to God, and also the all-sufficient sacrifice for sin.

IN HIM all glories meet, and every perfection centres. In HIM each type has its perfect antitype, its full unfolding. The sin-offering, burnt-offering, peace-offering, meat-offering, and drink-offering (ver. 14, 15), all point to HIM (indeed they all but feebly shadow forth His glory), and all of them shine forth resplendently in that One great sacrifice, when the Lord of glory poured out His soul unto death.

"By HIMSELF" He purged our sins, and is *now* sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. He has "made peace by the blood of His cross," and *now* "He is our peace," and "by HIM" we draw near to God.

We are accepted in the Beloved, and are privileged to feed with God upon the bread of God, which came down from heaven, and to delight in the strong wine which Jesus presents to God, and of which we also are permitted to partake. O how precious are His thoughts towards us! How great is the sum of them! If we would declare and count them they are more than can be numbered!

But again we read, that when the days of the

Nazarite's vow were fulfilled, he was to shave off the hair of his head and "put it in the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace-offerings."

How blessedly true this was of Jesus—of that holy head on whose brow "holiness to the Lord" had been always engraved. "His head" was "as the most fine gold, His locks bushy and black as a raven"—fruitfulness to God had marked His every word and work. And all the perfection of that spotless life, all that He was and did, was mingled with that costly sacrifice, and ascended up like the Nazarite's hair, as a sweet savour unto God.

O what joy God had in the sacrifice of Christ; and while, if we may so say, He must have been rent with anguish because of the torture wherewith He was obliged to afflict His well-beloved Son, yet what delight and satisfaction He must have found in the perfections of that blessed One. The more He was tested, the more His loveliness shone forth; and the greater the pressure that was put upon Him, the more thoroughly His intrinsic purity and holiness was proved. Truly He is "the chiefest among ten thousand," "the altogether lovely One."

The peace-offering which the Nazarite offered also provided a feast. (Compare Numbers vi. 19, 20 with Leviticus vii. 15, 33, 34.) And who can measure the feasting which has resulted from the sacrifice of Christ? Eternity alone will tell the tale. To this feast we are invited, and while God has His full portion in Christ, He gives us His flesh to eat and His blood to drink, and bids us eat and drink and be satisfied.

After this we read that the Nazarite might drink wine. So we hear our blessed Lord saying to His Father in that wonderful prayer recorded in John xvii., "Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." And God has highly exalted Him, and seated Him at His own right hand, and "anointed him with

the oil of gladness above His fellows," and given Him a full reward for all His sorrow and toil below. Soon "the kingdom" shall be given to Him, and its "new wine" will then be shared with us.

Jesus is now enthroned in glory, and all power is given to Him in heaven and earth. He is exalted as the Prince of Peace. He sits upon the throne of grace, and distributes blessings to all who come to Him. He has received gifts for men, yea for the rebellious also. It was in the very act of blessing His disciples that He was taken up from them into heaven, and His gracious benediction still is—

"THE LORD BLESS THEE AND KEEP THEE;"

"THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE TO SHINE UPON THEE AND BE GRACIOUS UNTO THEE;"

"THE LORD LIFT UP HIS COUNTENANCE UPON THEE AND GIVE THEE PEACE."

We have thus briefly glanced at a few thoughts connected with Jesus as the perfect Nazarite, and if the Lord will, at some future time we may consider the same type in its practical bearing upon ourselves as the followers of our Lord Jesus.

A THOUGHT ON PILGRIMAGE.

OH to be a *pilgrim* indeed!—with heart taken off the things of sight, and "fixed" on the "unseen" things, the riches laid up for us in our Lord Jesus. But better still to gaze on HIMSELF; to endure as seeing Him who is invisible. Is there not a joy, a calm repose, when we can look around and say in truth, 'I have nothing here; I am waiting for my Lord from heaven; and as His servant I only want to do His will?'

It is comparatively easy to say this when things are dark, but can we say so when things around are bright? What would earth's brightness be, if through the opened heavens we saw *Him* crowned with glory and honour?

THE TEACHING OF THE RED SEA.

EXODUS xiv.

THROUGHOUT the whole word of God—the record of the dealings of infinite love with a guilty, ruined race—two truths are ever prominent, the one, the full and blessed provision which grace has made for the sinful and the lost, and the other the consequent claim of God, where this grace is known and felt, to a corresponding walk of holy devotedness on the part of His beloved child. Under these two comprehensive heads almost the whole of the word of inspiration may be ranged, and amid the richest variety of illustration and instruction, the lessons, in whatever form conveyed, whether by histories, or by types and figures, or by direct statement and exhortation, are everywhere substantially the same. Man, made by the God of love for the gratification of His own heart, has robbed God of His joy by the sin which has separated between infinite holiness and the polluted creature. “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” An atonement was provided and sin put away, so that the Holy God can now again draw nigh to and love and bless the sinner. “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them,” and every perishing sinner who looks believingly to the cross has peace with God, as pardoned, cleansed, and brought nigh through the precious blood of God’s beloved Son. From this abounding grace results the duty to walk worthy of God who has called us to His kingdom and glory. Some of the children of God see not the former of these truths: more, yea very many more, it is to be feared, fail to discern or to lay to heart the latter. Some open not their hearts to the outpourings of that love of God which would satisfy them with its fulness; others of us, though taught somewhat of the peace and security which are the purchased portion of the soul that is cast on Christ, yet forget that we have been taken out of this present

evil world, in order that we should walk in separation from it as the children of our Father in Heaven, that we should be salt to it to stay its corruption, light to illumine its darkness, and that thus we should be witnesses of Him who died for us, and fruitful branches of the true Vine.

In the preceding volume instruction was sought on these points from the history of Noah's preservation in the Ark. Let us now seek to learn some of the lessons taught by the narrative of Israel's deliverance at the Red Sea.

Mark well then at the threshold who are the people chosen of God to show forth His grace, and mercy, and long-suffering. It is to Israel that Moses testifies, "The Lord did not set His love upon you nor choose you because ye were more in number than any people, for *ye were the fewest of all people*: but because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers, has He brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you." (Deut. vii.) Fit emblems these of the subjects of divine grace now—the weakest, the most undeserving, the most vile. And then as now God set His love on those whose failure and stiff-neckedness, whose need of tender all-enduring long-suffering, He fully foreknew.

Mark too the origin, the source, the fountain of all blessing to fallen man, the spontaneous love, and the unsought immutable purpose of God. "Because He loved you," and "because He would keep the oath which He had sworn." And the same unfathomable grace gave us, beloved brethren, to Christ, and chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. The "immutable counsel" and the "oath" of the same God who cannot lie are the sufficient consolation and resting-place of every sinner who has fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before him.

Mark, further, the only basis on which this infinite love can manifest itself for the sinner's blessing, the

only pathway by which it can draw nigh to the defiled creature, and satisfy its yearnings for his deliverance—the precious atoning blood. But for this there could have been but one common ruin for Israelite as well as Egyptian, for where sin is, the Holy God cannot come; but with sin put away, though as yet indeed but in type (see Romans iii. 25), the Israelite within the blood-sprinkled doorposts could sit securely feeding on the Lamb of God while the destroying angel executed righteous judgment upon all outside. How prone are we, dear children of God, to be selfishly satisfied with the knowledge that the precious blood has wrought deliverance for us individually: how little have we entered or can enter into the great mystery of ATONEMENT.

The blood shed and sprinkled, deliverance necessarily follows. Israel is now the purchased people of God, God's "*holy people,*" holy in type with the holiness of Christ, and no power of created beings can any longer have dominion over them, or hold them back from Him whose love has provided for their redemption to Himself at so great a cost. Egypt, whose groaning captives they had been till now, can keep them captive no longer. Pharaoh and his hosts oppose their departure in vain; for God is with them, and he that fights against them is fighting against God. Would that every redeemed sinner in this our day, every guilty one who has cast a believing look at the cross of Christ, as fully and as simply apprehended what the precious blood has done for him or her. Another Pharaoh, even Satan, will surely follow you, dear trembling one, and his hosts, not flesh and blood as those of Egypt, but more powerful and more malicious far, will pursue in hostile array to prevent your escape. Too long have you been a willing slave, too long a helper of the enemy of God, to be let go without a struggle. But what can all the armies of the evil one do against you? You are Christ's. Utterly unworthy and loathsome in yourself, yet the blood of Christ

engages all the power of the Omnipotent One on your behalf, and no weapon formed against you can prosper. Looking unbelievably at yourself, at your own vile-ness, your own weakness, looking thus at those that are against you, as faithless Israel when overtaken by "all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horse-men, and his army" (verse 9), you might well be "sore afraid." But one upward glance of the eye at any moment reveals Him whose "love" and whose "oath" can never fail, and before whose arms, ever ready to be upraised for your protection, Satan and all his ministers fall back dismayed. Only beware, dear purchased one, that the language of your heart by reason of unbelief is never such as that which proceeded from the lips of Israel, "Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness." "*These things were written for our admonition.*" God has a right to expect confiding love in those for whom He is causing all things to work together for good.

Let us note how this wondrous deliverance proceeds. "And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. *The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.*" This is God's blessed way. This is His salvation. When we were dead, God gave us life. The guilty sinner can do nothing to merit eternal life, yet the most guilty may receive it if they will as "the gift of God." God delivers from all condemnation—from all that of which Egypt was the type—from all bondage to that in which by nature we walked when we were children of wrath even as others. The whole work is God's. We can do nothing towards this. Our place is to hold our peace. But His work

is perfect and sure. There will not be a hoof left behind in Egypt, and Egypt can do nothing but urge the child of God the more quickly away from it along the path in which God in the pillar of cloud and of fire directs.

That the rescue of the enslaved sinner from the spiritual Egypt is no work of man, how surely, how plainly, do the divided waters of the Red Sea testify. By this same way, brethren and sisters in the Lord, we have all been brought out. A way through the region of death has been opened up for us. In Christ we died. In Christ we live anew. The waters which are death to the Egyptian are made to us a wall on the right hand and on the left. Without a miracle might God have led His people round the head of that sea which separated Egypt from the wilderness to which He would bring them: but this could not be, for "all these things happened unto them for examples," and He would by figures not to be mistaken proclaim that it is to His mighty power and to His outstretched arm alone that the powers of evil succumb, that to Him alone and altogether the guilty child of sin is indebted for salvation.

And as unspeakable love will have all its unworthy but precious ones to be with itself, far removed from Egypt and from all that Egypt represents, to be where it can rejoice over them and hold communion with them, so will it sever them for ever from that region of destruction, darkness and death. The pathway opened by omnipotence closes, *to be for ever closed* when God's dear child has passed. "The waters returned," and who can rend them asunder again? There is "dry land in the midst of the sea" to every sinner who after groaning under the taskmasters of Egypt turns from it, sprinkled with the precious blood, with his face towards the land to which God leads. But, blessed be God, return is impossible. The way back has never been travelled by a single soul. If we

had the power to divide that sea again, so evil is that old man still borne about with us, so given are we to unbelief, so easily led to hanker after the things of Egypt, that we might make the attempt. We are to be trusted in nothing. The guilty, awful, oft-repeated cry of redeemed Israel, "Would that we had died in Egypt," may be ours also unless we watch and pray. But for the redeemed now—as it will soon be hereafter for each despiser and rejecter of the grace of God, "*there is a great gulf fixed,*" so that neither can pass over from his own place. Meditate on this, desponding, unthankful, unfruitful child of God. Though utterly undeserving you have passed from death to life. Read Romans vi. and learn that sin has no longer any claim upon you, or, if you will cast away unbelief and look to God, any power over you. You were the "slave of sin" but you have by God Himself been taken out of this slavery that you may henceforth live to Him.

Once more—turn aside adoringly to see what *God has wrought*. "The Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever." So had God declared and so it came to pass. "Thus God saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and *Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.*" And will any doubting saved one tremble as though Egyptians still pursued? Consider that with the sprinkling of the blood the bondage to Egypt of every Israelite ceased. No Egyptian thenceforward could afflict with burdens or lay hand on God's redeemed. And *no Egyptian passed the sea*. Shall God's child then see them where they cannot be? Shall we make phantoms to pursue us in the wilderness, to destroy our peace and deprive God of our love, and joy, and fruit? Other enemies indeed are to be met with both in the wilderness and beyond Jordan, enemies whom we can meet victoriously from hour to hour only, if we are strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, and put

on the whole armour of God. But Amalek and Canaanites—"principalities and powers in heavenly places"—are not Egyptians. With an Egyptian God's child has never fought. The Son of God secured the victory over these; none other could have prevailed. We but stood still and saw. Now, *with every Egyptian dead on the shore*, God calls us to be strong and valiant, to fight the good fight of faith, and to learn as good soldiers of Christ Jesus, and in conflict with very different foes from those whom He has slain, the needed lessons of obedience and trust, of our own weakness and of our Father's all-sufficiency. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God."

Such, beloved brethren, is *our deliverance*—how full, how complete; but alas! how feebly, how faintly, how imperfectly portrayed. And what remains to us, the rescued ones, the blessed ones, "blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ," during the little while of our sojourn here below? The walk in the wilderness—the walk with God, the walking so as *to please Him*, the walking worthily of Him as beloved children. For this we are delivered. This is our present duty. This should be the *only care* of each heart. For Egypt and the Egyptians we have no cause to care, for we have seen them all destroyed and left. But the wilderness remains, and with it cause abundant to be daily and hourly cast on Him who alone can keep our feet from falling and enable us to walk aright. Are we still living on the things of Egypt? or if not, are our hearts yet set on them—its "fish" and "cucumbers" and "leeks and onions, "the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life," so abundantly spread out before us by Satan on all sides? Or are we contented, are we rejoicing, are we satisfied with God, happy in the food convenient for us, the daily manna from above

which His love supplies? God's manna is esteemed to be "light bread," and "the soul loathes" it (Num. xxi. 5), where the taste remains for the world's "leeks," fed, alas, too often by the habitual enjoyment of them. Brethren, this is not our calling. We have been "*taken out of this present evil age*" (Gal. i.) not that we might again seek to have our portion in it, whether much or little, but that we may live to God. Shall we who died to these things continue any longer therein? Read 1 Cor. x. 1-12, and pray that ye may not "lust after" these things as Israel lusted, that ye may not be "idolators as were some of them." Let us not forget those "whose carcasses fell in the wilderness." How shall we escape, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, if we neglect so great salvation? (Heb. ii. 2; iii. 1.)

There is a solemn voice in this history to the unsaved—to the trifler with God. You have not cared to sprinkle your door-posts with the precious blood. Yet as an Egyptian or an Israelite every soul must very soon pass into the waters under the eye of God. Cast in your lot with Israel, and you shall pass through unharmed. But remember that "the Egyptians assaying to do this were drowned." (Heb. xi.)

Finally, but a word, for limits have been exceeded, to call attention to the use which has been made by the Spirit of God in 1 Peter iii. 20, 21, and 1. Cor. x. 1, 2, of the histories of the ark and of the Red Sea as types of baptism in Christ. Contemplate that ark borne through the overwhelming flood, "the fountains of the great deep broken up," the destroying waves and tempest on all sides, and "the windows of heaven opened" above. Contemplate then the walls of water on the right and on the left, and the cloud above, and Israel "baptised in the cloud and in the sea." Consider then the solemn truths thus taught—no cleansing surely, but *death, burial, and resurrection*—and consider what must be the figure and form ordained of God to represent this amazing reality.

THE JOY OF THE LORD OUR STRENGTH.

Read NEHEMIAH viii. 1-12.

How matchless is the grace of God! What tenderness and compassion shine forth in those words to weeping Israel—"Mourn not nor weep," "neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

They wept, and well they might, for they had deeply sinned; but He who loves to heal the broken heart at once desires and seeks to comfort them. He bids them look away from *self* to HIM; to gaze no more upon their own rebellion, but rather ponder on the rich provision of His grace. He points them to the sacrifice—to Christ—and bids them "eat the fat and drink the sweet" and make "great mirth."

How truly like our God! He hastes to meet and spread a feast for His returning prodigals. No sooner are our hearts subdued and contrite for our sins, than He presents us with the flesh and blood of Christ, and bids us feast on that. This is the *one* great remedy for sin. This is the feast He has provided for His feeble and oftentimes wilful, wayward children. This is the wine well refined, with which He cheers our souls (see Is. xxv. 6), while His banner of love floats over our heads.

True, there must be self-judgment and confession of sin *before* we can be restored to this blessed fellowship; but fretting and mourning will never give *power* over sin. But when God *thus* welcomes the contrite one, and speaks comfortably unto him—when He commands him to forget his sorrow, and to delight himself in JESUS, and feeds him again with the children's bread—the heart is indeed subdued, and love, and gratitude, and praise, take the place of coldness or rebellion, and the wanderer is constrained by this boundless love of God to walk in holy obedience and godliness.

May we, like Israel, understand His words (ver. 12), and enter into the joy of this holy feast, and prove for ourselves that THE JOY OF THE LORD IS OUR STRENGTH.

CONSIDER HIM.

Heb. xii. 8.

ONE of the first and brightest glories of Christianity is, that it has for its central point a *Living Person*.

Christianity contains the beautiful story of redemption; yet the object it points to is not chiefly redemption, but the Redeemer. Light is thereby thrown around on all things for the believing eye; but if that eye be not attracted to the source of light, to HIM who is Himself the light, it must abide in darkness.

What would the new religion have been to its first disciples without the living Jesus? He was everything to them. So much so that when He disappeared for a little from among them they had a mind to give it up altogether. (John xxi. 3; Luke xxiv. 21.)

So when He was about to leave them to return to His Father's house, the burden of His touching farewell is, 'Remember *me*, love *me*, abide in *me*, trust *me*, suffer for *me*, rejoice in *me*, and look for *me* to return to take you to myself.' As much as to say, I want to be in my own person the centre and spring of your whole lives, as much now in my absence as I have been these last three years and a half. And this is meant for our instruction as well as theirs. One great fault in these last days is giving the place due to the living, loving, coming Christ, to doctrine or service, or an outward form of godliness.

In these two little words—"consider Him," is contained the first great duty of Christ's saints. While this is fulfilled, our souls *must* prosper; but if this simple direction is neglected, all doctrine, all diligent Christian work, all fervent zeal for truth and holiness will not even *help* to make up the want.

The Scriptures afford us every facility for this most blessed study. Four faithful narratives, full of most

minute details, set forth in simple form the story of that beautiful life on earth.

Not content with a historic acquaintance with the events of our Lord's life and ministry, if we search deeper, and seek to apprehend the reason in HIMSELF for every deed and word,—if we study the divine character, the characteristics displayed in each action, we shall find a mine of rich revelation of God. We shall see the most profound humility along with the most dignified self-respect. We shall discover most keen and withering censure of hypocrisy, and the softest, kindest regards for the poor and guilty sinner.

Words of tenderness proclaim a tender heart, looks of pity outwardly reflect the sympathizing soul within. He spoke exceeding loving words, *because* He loved exceedingly. He healed and comforted and delivered, *because* He felt for the sufferers who sought Him. He murmured not at His unhappy lot, *because* He never felt dissatisfied. In *Him* no outward act or word ever concealed or misrepresented the thoughts of His mind.

We may study the person of our blessed Lord in a variety of scenes—in His house and amongst His bitter enemies—in rest and peaceful intercourse with those who loved Him, and in fierce controversy with the opposing Pharisees—in the severest personal suffering, and in the majestic exercise of almighty power in the relief of others' pains.

Like the artist who desires to paint a lovely landscape, we may sit and contemplate HIM. The painter will view the scene in sunshine and in storm, in stillness and commotion, in the blaze of the noonday sun and the glimmer of moonlight. He will survey its outline, and note its varied colouring. For days and even weeks he will accustom his eye to take in and his mind to be impressed by the scene before him, and then he will return to his studio and set forth its beauties from memory.

So may it be our delight to do with the object of our

study, that the image of *His* beauteous character may be reproduced in ours, to the glory of His name.

Think: why are details of the minutest kind given us in so many cases in the gospels, but that we may thereby become better acquainted with the chief actor in them all—that the person of our blessed Lord may become dear to us beyond everything?

What is the charm of that well-known interview with Peter, marked by the thrice-repeated, “Lovest thou me?” It is its intense personality. What do the scenes at Bethany teach, but that Jesus seeks and delights in His people’s love? Why was Judas’ charitable appeal for the poor rebuked so immediately? Because he did not see that devotion to the person of the Lord was to be preferred to all service. What was the force of our Lord’s touching remonstrance with Simon the leper-Pharisee? It was, ‘You don’t value *me* as you ought. *Thou gavest me no kiss.*’

In a hundred of these simple narratives it might be shown that our blessed Master desired above all things that our religion should be essentially personal, and that *He HIMSELF* should fill the highest place in our hearts. Read the gospels with this thought before you, and you will see how large a place it fills in them.

We have the Lord Himself no more bodily present with us, but the Spirit has come on purpose to keep Him before our hearts, and to be our constant means of communication with Him.

“He shall glorify *me*,” said our Lord. And thus, when we are considering Him in obedience to the word, the Spirit and *we* are in unison and communion.

“That I may know *Him*,” was St. Paul’s most earnest and absorbing ambition; and I have no doubt, in eternity, and in the very presence of the Lord Himself, “that I may know Him” will still be the desire of all His saints, and that it will take eternity itself to reveal the fulness of Him in whom all fulness dwells.

We might pursue the subject throughout the epistles, and perhaps more wonderfully still in the Book of Psalms, where the deepest secrets of the inward man of our blessed Lord are discovered for our worshipping admiration and instruction; but enough for the present.

Let me only add, that this is not a matter of *brain-work*, of hard study and critical reading, but of *heart-work*, of deep and constant meditation. Its delight is not in novelties discovered in the Bible; no, the pastures are familiar to us all; but it is meditation on the beauties of HIM who shines forth in every deed and word, the chiefest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely.

THE CHURCH: THE TEMPLE.

“In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” was the penalty attached to the *first* act of disobedience to the only command given to Adam by which his obedience could be tested.

According to the sentence, the first sin brought death with it *at once* to the souls of both Adam and Eve; for though in their bodies they lived on for many years, their souls became at once “dead in trespass and sin” before God.

This is proved by their communion with God being broken, and by their turning their backs on Him, and trying to hide from Him under the trees of the garden, instead of, as before, *enjoying* His presence.

In nothing perhaps is the spiritual death that thus passed upon them and all their seed more manifest than in man’s thoughts on the subject of the temple of God. Even believers, in the light of Christ, are slow to learn that “God dwelleth not in temples made by hands,” and that “God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.”

Man’s thought has always been to make a temple for God, a place in which to worship Him, to propitiate,

Him by some sacrifice, whether of victims slain and offered, or by prayer and other devotional exercises. This is true of *all* men, whether worshippers in an idol temple or professing Christians.

Man *must* worship something, and Satan's policy from the time of Cain until now has been to put a false *object* of worship and a false *system* of religion before each soul, always imitating the revealed truth, and mixing with the false as much of the *outward form* of the true as possible to satisfy man's religious craving, and at the same time to *keep* him in darkness and away from God.

From the *first* God's way of salvation was through faith in the promised Seed (Gen. iii. 15), and through the blood-shedding of the substitutionary sacrifice. (Gen. iii. 21; Heb. ix. 22.) God clothed the sinner thus saved by His grace in the righteousness of the Substitute—"the coats of *a skin*."

The tent and the altar form the main accompaniments of the life on earth of the patriarchal saints. The *tent* evinced the pilgrim character of the sinner saved through death, and therefore on his journey to a better country, where there should be no sin nor death. The *altar* was the symbol of the *real* salvation itself, as above described, God "passing over" their sins by means of the blood of a sacrifice, until by the One Offering, *once* offered, they were *for ever* "put away" from His sight, no more to be remembered.

In process of time it pleased God to elect and separate to Himself a people for His name and glory, whom He might specially train, lead, and govern, and through whom He might prepare the way for the advent of the promised Seed.

In connexion with this people (Israel) we have a further revelation of His will in the construction of a tabernacle or tent, together with a more complex system of sacrifice and ritual as "figures of the true."

God's *first* thought in this tabernacle was not a

“place of worship” in which His people, saved from Egypt and gathered to Him in the wilderness, might worship, but a place where He might dwell in their midst. “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering. . . . And let them make me a sanctuary; that I *may dwell among them.*” (Ex. xxv.) Not so much that they might come to Him, but that He might come and dwell among them. From the time that sin came in, man could draw near to God through the blood of the sacrifice, and for this purpose only, no tabernacle was needed.

Exodus xix. 3-6 beautifully evinces that God’s desire toward His redeemed people was to bring them nigh unto Himself. The same purpose is evident in the appointment of the morning and evening lamb. (Ex. xxix. 38-46.) God would still dwell with His people, in spite of their constant failure and sin, and through the *continual* acceptance of this offering for them He could bear with their manners in the wilderness, as now He does with us through JESUS, who is the constant burnt-offering before God for our acceptance.

In 2 Sam. vii. the same glorious grace is conspicuous. David would build HIM a house. Jehovah’s reply to His servant’s desire is, “the LORD telleth thee that He will make *thee* a house,” and then the covenant in Christ, David’s seed and David’s Lord, is made with him *for ever*.

The stability and certainty of this everlasting covenant rests upon the fact that it is made with CHRIST, the Head of the body, for us the members, and *not* with the members apart from Him. If the Head fails, the whole body falls with HIM; but “HE changeth not.” Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” Therefore we sing—

“So safe, so calm, so satisfied,
The soul that clings to Thee.”

On the completion both of the tabernacle and the temple, the glory of the Lord filled the place, and down to the time when He left that temple, owing to Israel's idolatry and unbelief, *His presence was everything*. Without *that* the ark with the cherubim which overshadowed it, the special seat of His manifestation of Himself (Ex. xxv. 22) might be taken to the battle, but only to be captured by the Philistines. (1 Sam. iv.) The mere tent or building, except for its typical import, was in itself nothing unless God was there to save, sanctify, and bless His people.

Let us now turn to the New Testament, to consider the Lord Jesus Himself.

From 1 Peter i. 10-12 and similar passages, we find that as a man walking with his back to the sun projects his shadow before him, so the Lord Jesus in promise, sacrifice, and prophecy, fore-announced and fore-shadowed His own coming, until in the fulness of time the Child was born, the Son given, the Word made flesh, and in the human body prepared for Him of the Father the *fulness* of the Godhead bodily was manifested.

The shechinah of God's glory, which had been, as it were, confined in both tabernacle and temple, and still more repressed by those who "limited the Holy One of Israel," shone forth unlet, unhindered in the perfect humanity of the man Christ Jesus. In HIM it was at home; and, as Noah's dove found no rest on the earth save in the ark, so God the Spirit could rest nowhere with satisfaction and delight save in the person of the Lord.

"In HIM was life, and the life was the light of men." In HIS person concentrated all that divine promise contained, sacrifice symbolized, prophecy announced, or king or priest or ritual shadowed forth; and from thenceforward all that God can or will bestow in time or eternity is through and by the Son of Man. *All* power in heaven and earth is His. He upholds *all* things

by the word of His power. He is the bestower of life, light, pardon, and peace to *all* who come to HIM, the distributor of *all* gifts to His Church, the all in all to each soul that trusts HIM.

It seems, therefore, natural to find the Lord, by whom "the Father" at last spoke to man, pointing to His own human body as *the temple* in contrast with the earthly building with which men's thoughts were occupied. (John ii.)

JESUS Himself is God's meeting-place with the sinner. We hear Him say, "No man cometh unto the Father but *by me*. I am the way, the truth, and the life." Even the Holy Spirit's office is to take of the things of Christ, and to show them unto us.

Thus through the humanity of Christ, in His birth, death, resurrection, and ascension, there is now for us a perfect, never-failing Altar, Sacrifice, and Priest at God's right hand—JESUS HIMSELF, and through HIM both Jew and Gentile have access by one Spirit to the FATHER.

In the light of *such* a presence, such a work for us, how paltry, trivial, and insulting to His majesty, glory, and love all shadowy rites on earth become, all exaltation of earthly buildings, with their altars and holy places. Even the term 'God's house' applied to a place of worship, shows a lack of appreciation of the dignity of the Christian's position and standing in Christ, and is not in accordance with the Lord's mind, since He disowned the temple in Jerusalem as the house of God, turned His back upon it, and pronounced it desolate.

Has God then *no* temple on earth in this dispensation? He has. "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again" were the Lord's words, which now, as made plain by the Spirit of God, we can understand.

"To whom coming, as unto a Living Stone . . . ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house."

(1 Peter ii. 4.) "Know ye not that *ye* are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. iii. 16.) "Ye are the temple of the living God." (2 Cor. vi. 16.) "Know ye not that *your body* is the temple of the Holy Ghost who is in you?" (1 Cor. vi. 19.)

These passages and Eph. ii. 19–22 prove that *now* God's believing people, gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus in any one place (as at Corinth), form His temple or tabernacle on earth. "As He is, so are we in this world." Whatever the Lord was in the days of His flesh as God's Temple on earth, so are we to be *in HIM, by HIM, and for HIM.*

Words cannot add to the grandeur, the solemnity, the responsibility of *the fact.* What manner of persons *ought* we to be, whether as individuals or collectively, in all holy conversation and godliness!

As He said, "A greater than Solomon is here," surely a greater Temple than Solomon's is here!

"Lord Jesus! in Thy name I pray,
Dwell Thou within my heart ;
So shall I, though on earth I stay,
Dwell with Thee where Thou art.

"With God, for God, to God I live,
One Spirit now with Thee :
Lord Jesus Christ, Thy precious name
My ceaseless boast shall be !"

NO GLORY HERE.

WHAT attractiveness could there have been in this world to JESUS, the beloved Son of God? Satan might cause all the brightness and glory of it to pass before *His* eyes, but it had no charms for *HIM.* He had come down from the heaven of heavens; He was familiar with all the effulgent brightness of that glory which He had with the Father before the world was; He had been accustomed to receive the pure and holy

worship of the hosts above; He knew the rapturous joy of close and constant intercourse with the Father, and all down here must have been as dross and dung to Him—defiled and worthless.

So will it be with us, as we by faith lay hold of heavenly joys. Let us press through the new and living way (which Christ has opened for us by His blood), and get communion with our God within the veil, and we shall lose our joy in earthly things. Let us but apprehend the love wherewith we are loved, the riches which are ours, the glory which is given us, the wondrous portion treasured up for us in Christ, and we shall see *no glory* in this poor polluted world—no treasures worth obtaining, no object of desire except to live to Christ, and do His blessed will.

It is *thus* we shall be freed from all besides—to spend our little while for Him; and *thus* shall we gain strength to work *with* Him, in bringing poor sinners to His feet, or leading His saved ones into closer fellowship with Him.

THE SHUNAMMITE IN HER GREAT TROUBLE.

2 Kings iv.

THE more of natural and earthly joy we have, the more exposed are we to natural and earthly sorrow. Those who have not much of earthly love and joy in their lives may do well in their hours of felt loneliness to remember that they are exempt from the sorrows, often deep and bitter, connected with such comforts.

“The time is short, brethren.” We are passing onward to the resurrection. *That* is our hope. All on *this* side of that glorious consummation is exposed to the inroads of decay and death.

This “great woman,” spoken of in 2 Kings iv., had longed for a mother’s joy. When asked if she desired to be spoken for to the king or to the captain of the host, she was able immediately to give her me-

morable and great answer, "I dwell among mine own people." What true greatness and nobility of character do these simple and sublime words convey!

But though she did not prefer an actual request to the prophet for a son, yet the God who knew her heart granted her desire when *all* natural hope had ceased to exist. This is God's way from the beginning to the end of His dealings with man, as revealed in the scriptures. He is "the God of hope" to man in this lost and hopeless world, *because* He is the God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things that be not as though they were.

From the beginning faith is called to recognize Him as the God of resurrection. This, brethren, is the clue to the understanding of the truth and the knowledge of God—the God of the scriptures. Yea, even nature itself may, and ought to confirm us, and to *enlarge* us in this, as the apostle shows in 1 Cor. xv.

When there was no natural hope of such a thing, this beloved woman of Shunem obtained, like Sarah before her, the fond desire of her heart from the God of hope. Let the exercised soul, who can find no ground of hope in self, see and understand the spiritual truth taught here. But we pass on to see her in her great trouble.

In proportion as the joy of embracing a son, when all hope of such a thing had died out of her heart, was great and deep, so is the grief and bitter anguish great when by a stroke the desire of her eyes is taken away from her. Her grief is too deep for ordinary human ministry. There is only one to whom she can open her full heart. It is good and edifying to notice her patient possession of soul till she reaches the prophet.

In days like the present it is strengthening and refreshing to get a little into the company of such a great and *deep* soul as we find in this woman of Shunem. There is nothing superficial about her. Gehazi may be sent to meet her, but it will not do. She cannot

open her heart at such a time to a mere official. Her sorrow lies too deep. We may see her resignation and her faith in her reply to his enquiry, but may we not also see something more? She could not wait to tell *him* her trouble. She was making her way with all speed to the presence of the "man of God." None but the one *through* whom she had received her greatest earthly joy could now meet her heart when it had lost that joy.

Is not Elisha, from the beginning to the end of his course of gracious power, a typical person? Coming after the righteous and stern testimony of Elijah was ended, as the Great Prophet followed John the Baptist, he cannot but remind us forcibly of Christ. The healing and the blessing, the paying of the debts of the debtor, and the giving of life to the dead, the turning of that which is poisoned to be good and profitable, and the feeding of a multitude with a few loaves, the cleansing of leprosy, and finally, even in death being the spring of life to the dead—all speak distinctly to us of our Great Healer and Saviour.

Now, looking at Elisha as shadowing our Great Prophet, what is the chief lesson the conduct of the Shunammite in her great trouble is calculated to give us? Is it not in the fact that her soul cleaves to Elisha as the one *through* whom she had been blest? Is it not that nothing can divert her from him?

Gehazi is unable either to *attract* her from his master or to *thrust* her away from him. At Elisha's feet she bows, and to him she tells her whole trouble. She knew well where the true sympathy and the power to help her resided. No one can detain her or divert her from Elisha. She may remind us of the disciples of the Baptist, who when they had taken up the headless body of their beloved master and committed it to the earth, went and told Jesus. This is a great secret, beloved in Christ. But now we are to learn a further lesson from this great and dear woman.

We next find that as no one, not even her husband, could *detain* her from Elisha, and no one could *divert* her from Elisha, so now that she has reached his presence, *nothing* can draw her away from that presence.

The prophet himself may command Gehazi to set out with all speed for the house of the dead, neither giving or receiving salutation till he laid the staff of Elisha on the face of the dead. It has *no* power to draw her away from the prophet himself. She shows no confidence in the power of this appointment or ordinance to raise the dead. As though she silently said to Elisha, 'Whatever help your staff may afford you in your journeying, I have no confidence that it can do this thing.' "As the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth I will not leave thee," is her great reply.

Is there not, brethren, a lesson for our souls in this conduct of the Shunammite? Is there not a seasonable *warning* in it for us? Are there not many in the present day who would fain have us believe in the power of the staff to give life? *It is vain.* The truly taught soul cleaves for life to the Lord of life, and looks for life for others from Himself, through His Word and Spirit. True faith will not leave the prophet to run after any staff, when it is proposed that the staff or ordinance should do what is altogether outside and beyond its appointed use.

Baptism and the supper of the Lord may *help* us under the blessing of the Lord, but *life* is from Himself. After we have received the life eternal by the Spirit of God through the gospel (His great ordinance for imparting life to the dead), we may be helped on our journey by the ordinances referred to above, and we shall be indeed if we observe them in the spirit of faith and love.

We are not to run, however, from the one extreme of expecting the staff to do more than it was given and appointed to do, to the other extreme of throwing the staff away altogether. Let us rather humbly and

thankfully accept every help our God has given us, while at the same time we watch that Christ has His true place in our confidence and affections.

The Shunammite would have been woefully disappointed had she followed the servant and the staff. By *cleaving to Elisha* she had her child given to her again to hold and enjoy in a manner doubtless more according to the mind of God. Deeply chastened in spirit now, and with a knowledge of God such as she had not before, she could better enjoy the gift.

The end of the Lord in her case, as in Job's, and in every other such case, proves that He is "very pitiful and of tender mercy." By the first and by the second gift of the child she was taught to know *the Lord that raiseth the dead*.

THE NAZARITE; OR, DELIGHTING IN GOD.

Numbers vi. 1-5.

THE VOW of the Nazarite is emphatically a voluntary one. There is no compulsion or necessity about it. It does not point to the righteous claims of a holy God, but rather to the free and willing sacrifice of a grateful and loving heart.

The claims of God's holiness *must* be met *before* the sinner can be delivered from the curse of a broken law, and brought into a place of blessing. But these claims have been fully met by JESUS the PERFECT NAZARITE. By His voluntary obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, He has made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness, and therefore there is now "no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus."

Through the rich provision of this costly sacrifice, we who believe in Jesus are cleansed from every sin, arrayed in a spotless righteousness, created anew in Christ Jesus, and blessed with all spiritual blessings. We stand accepted in the Beloved, complete in Christ, righteous as He is righteous. We may look back upon

our countless and aggravated sins, and rejoicing in the cleansing power of the precious blood, may sing aloud, "Who is he that condemneth?" We may look onwards to the ages of eternity, and still more exultingly exclaim, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

Through the blood-shedding of the precious Son of God we have been brought into an everlasting covenant with God; a covenant which is ordered in all things and sure; a covenant in which full provision has been made for every possible demand or contingency, and in which God in matchless grace has pledged *Himself* to perfect His own work within us, and to present us with exceeding joy before the presence of His glory.

Still more, He presents HIMSELF to us as our portion, as *our exceeding joy*. Not only as our *future* portion, but as the One who is ever ready to satiate our souls. There are rivers of pleasure prepared for us *even now*, and strength and gladness laid up for us in His presence. Our *eternal* portion is sure and certain, and nought can touch it.

"Our life is hid with Christ in God
Beyond the reach of harm."

But our *present* enjoyment of the riches treasured up for us in Christ, and consequent strength whether for conflict or service, depends entirely upon how much or how little we have *present* fellowship with Christ. Hence the importance of the Nazarite vow.

The special characteristic of this vow is, that the person separates himself *unto the Lord*; and it is very blessed to note that it was open to *every* Israelite. It was not confined to priest, or prince, or warrior, but was open alike to every *man or woman*. The woman could neither fight nor rule; she could neither do deeds of prowess nor of fame; but she *could love*. How gracious then, that she should be thus mentioned by name in this vow which so beautifully typifies affection to and delight in the Lord.

The *separation* here spoken of, is not for some peculiar service (as Paul and Barnabas were separated unto the work to which the Lord had called them), nor is it to peculiar suffering or affliction for Christ's sake; but it is the *voluntary* separation of a soul from any thing and every thing that would hinder its joy in the Lord: the *willing* act of a heart which has found such a satisfying portion in Christ, that it will gladly sacrifice anything that stands in the way of fellowship with Him.

Such a soul has been in the banqueting-house, and turning from all the world can give, it says to its Beloved, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love." It has drank of the 'deep sweet well of love,' and tasted of the hidden manna, and thus earth's streams have lost their charm, and all its choicest joys are counted nothing worth. Such an one *can* "separate himself from wine and strong drink."

There was nothing sinful in drinking wine or eating grapes; indeed these were part of Israel's *promised* blessings. But the one who separated himself as a Nazarite *unto the Lord*, was "to eat nothing that is made of the vine-tree, from the kernel even to the husk." He had found a *better* portion. He desired closer fellowship with God than others had, and therefore abstained from partaking of these natural blessings that he might be more capable of entering into the higher and richer joys for which he panted.

So is it now. The soul that finds its joy in God, can turn away from many *lawful* joys, and feel it cares not for them. It finds it has a *goodly* heritage in Christ. His love so satisfies, His grace so fills, His promises so cheer, His comforts so delight, that it has room for nothing more. It gazes with a grateful eye on all the earthly blessings strewed around its path, and thanks the Lord for all; but upward, upward soars the heart; it cannot feed on these, it seeks the

heavenly food; nor can it find a resting-place away from Jesus' feet.

And oh, the recompence—the full reward! Ah, who can tell the bliss, the deep, unutterable bliss that such an one enjoys! How Jesus comes and manifests Himself—how He reveals the treasures of His grace—how He delights to have a heart thus occupied with Him—and how He sheds His love abroad within that heart!

We need again to notice that this is all *voluntary*. It is the natural outflow of *love*; for though love may be won, it cannot be commanded. The person is *not* separated *by* the Lord, nor yet separated *by others* unto the Lord, but he separates *himself* unto the Lord. It is his own spontaneous and willing act.

It must be the same with us. The Lord does not *command* such separation (although He delights in it), nor must we *impose* it upon others. Indeed it is useless to impose it either on ourselves or others; for unless it is the fruit of a *willing* heart, we shall only put away *wine* to indulge in *vinegar* (ver. 3).

Vinegar typifies that which is sour: the harshness and hardness of nature, which is cross, or stern, or stoical, and *affects* indifference to the things it is craving after.

This mention of *vinegar* is very blessed, because it gives us a true test by which we may discern whether our separation unto the Lord is *real* or *pretended*.

Satan is ever seeking to imitate the things of God, and he strives to produce an affected Nazariteship, an outside sanctity in the flesh, and thus to puff us up, and make us something in our own eyes, and so effectually injure our souls.

This spurious Nazariteship may very carefully abstain from *wine* (as typifying all the joys and pleasures of earth), but it will be sure to indulge largely in *vinegar*: so that a harsh, censorious, complaining spirit will be manifested, instead of the gracious, genial, loving spirit which must necessarily flow from increased fellowship with Christ.

Again, no razor was to come upon his head (ver. 5). There is much said in scripture about the *hair*, all of which leads to the conclusion that it typifies outward beauty, glory, and strength.

When the leper was cleansed, he had to shave off all his hair; and so when we were converted, all our natural and fancied beauty faded away, and we saw ourselves in our true state, as abominable and filthy before God. But now, as a new creation in Christ Jesus, the Holy Ghost has been given to dwell within us, that we might bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. These fruits are very lovely, but like the hair, of slow growth, and easily shorn off.

It is blessedly said of the Nazarite, "*he shall be holy*, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow." How significant, *he shall be holy*; for only as *we* are holy unto the Lord will these beautiful fruits abound. They will not grow on unhallowed nature's soil; they will not flourish in earth's ungenial clime. No, we must soar on high, and bask in the sunshine of Jesu's love, if we would bring forth much fruit. Gazing on Him we *shall* grow like Him; and *leaning* on Him His strength will be made perfect in our weakness, and we shall abound in every good word and work.

These spiritual tresses are very precious to God. They abounded in the richest profusion on Jesus, His beloved Son, and He has made provision that they should also grow thick and long upon us, and make us a name and a praise to Him.

The Nazarite was a *marked* person. His hair grew long, and he was known in the streets. He is beautifully described in Lamentations as purer than snow, whiter than milk, more ruddy in body than rubies, and his polishing of sapphires.

So will it be with us, as we are true Nazarites, *holy unto the Lord*. The beauty of the Lord our God will be upon us, and the unction of the Holy One will rest upon us, and our lives will be bright and brilliant

with the same rare and costly graces which marked every word and act of our beloved Lord.

But we must take heed to *the razor*. There is much around and within us which is prone to act like the razor, and only as we keep company with Christ shall we be able to resist its baneful influence.

Our own pride, or self-will, or self-sufficiency, have mighty power to strip us of these lovely fruits, which are so precious to our God. If these natural evils are not kept under, they quickly shave off our spiritual tresses, and leave us naked and bald before God and man. These evils are still within us, and ever prone to rise up, so that we need continually to be renewed in the spirit of our mind. Our thoughts and feelings must be brought into the very presence of God, for *there* only can they be truly judged and subdued. But He is able and willing to make all grace abound toward us, and to bring every thought into obedience to Himself.

Again, the sin of others will often *act* as "the razor," and rob us of the meekness and gentleness and patience which befit us as the followers of Christ. Here again the only secret of victory is fellowship with Christ; for only as we walk so closely with Him that we intuitively turn to Him, and talk with Him about everything, shall we be able to tread our daily path so as to please and glorify Him.

There may also be some special scenes, or temptations, or circumstances, which have peculiar power to disturb or ruffle our souls, and we should carefully avoid all such as being *a razor* to us, though they may be quite harmless to another Christian.

If we would be Nazarites unto God, our *one* object must be to draw so near to Him that we may be increasingly conformed to His blessed image, and get power from Him, so to walk that in all things we may be the living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men.

Though the standard is surely very high, it is well worth aiming after; and He who has set it before us delights to meet the soul in its struggles after it, and will not disappoint the one who seeks.

THE TEMPLE OF GOD—WHAT IS IT?

WE read that the children of Israel “drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and *that Rock* was CHRIST.” This metaphor appears in various ways in the Old Testament scriptures—to express one of the many manifestations of the Son of God to the saints of old. In the New Testament the Lord Himself uses it, to give to Peter and to the other disciples the first intimation of the new relationship He was about to form.

When, in answer to the Lord’s question, Peter said, “Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God,” the Lord instantly replied, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven;” and added, “I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon *this Rock* I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” We have thus the Lord’s own authority for saying that Peter, having “heard and learned of the Father,” was drawn to Christ, and was thus enabled unhesitatingly to confess *who* and *what* Christ was.

Here then we see Christ is “the Rock,” “the Living Stone,” spoken of by Isaiah. “Thus saith the LORD God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation.” A *living superstructure* has to be built upon this Living Stone.

The apostle Paul assures the Corinthians, that “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” He also writes: “According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder I have laid the foundation.” He had

preached "Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and could remind them—whom also ye have received, whereon ye stand, and by whom also ye are saved.

The Lord Jesus Christ received into the heart by faith is the only foundation on which the soul can rest. He is God's provision for the ungodly, the ruined, and *lost* soul. He is also the Rock that never can be moved for the *saved* soul; and whether resting or standing on that Rock, or hid by God Himself "in a cliff of the rock," as Moses was (Exodus xxxiii. 22), the soul is equally and eternally secure. Indeed Christians are entitled to say, our "life is hid with Christ in God;" and looking out from that place of security and blessing, are privileged to become acquainted with God's purposes, and to learn to do His will.

God the Father first communicated the knowledge of His Son to Peter, and believing on Him, Peter became "a living stone," and was built upon and united to *Him* who was "THE LORD JEHOVAH," "the Rock of Ages" (Isa. xxvi. 4), God's "sure foundation," His "elect and precious stone." Peter writes to the strangers scattered abroad, and says, "To whom coming as unto a Living Stone . . . ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house."

When Saul of Tarsus had his blind eyes opened to heavenly light, and received the knowledge of the truth from Jesus Himself, he straightway preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God; and all who believed his testimony received Christ, and equally with Peter and Saul became living stones, built upon God's foundation, and form a part of that building which has been in progress ever since.

Mark then how truth is gradually developed in scripture. God dwelt with Israel in the *wilderness* in a curtained tabernacle made according to His own directions by the free-will offerings of the people. (See page 3.) He dwelt also with Israel in the *land*, in the temple for which provision was made by David, though it was

built by Solomon. When the fulness of time had come *the Babe* was born in Bethlehem; and from that moment until the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, God was manifested in the flesh in the *temple* of CHRIST'S *body*. He was "Immanuel, God with us." (See p.35.)

The tabernacle of God in the wilderness shadowed forth His wisdom and glory, and Israel's offerings exhibited their willing-heartedness. The "exceeding magnificent" temple of David and Solomon was of fame and glory throughout all countries; but both were now to be superseded, and a heavenly structure was to be formed and built by the Son of God Himself, which would as far eclipse all buildings made by hands as Christ was greater than Moses or Solomon, and which would outlast sun, moon, and stars; yea, continue throughout the countless ages of eternity.

During the sojourn of the Son of God in this world, He revealed Himself as the Foundation upon which He would rear a temple for God—not of the "goodly stones" which composed the earthly temple, nor of the frail materials which formed His habitation in the wilderness, but a building of "*living stones*," builded *by Himself upon Himself*, to grow up into a holy temple in the Lord.

Christ then is the "Rock," the one Foundation; and every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is a living stone quarried out of a dark and dead world, builded on, united to, and made one with Him by whose power and grace he has been delivered from the world, from death and judgment; and every one of these living stones has a place in that glorious temple which is to be God's habitation for ever. Life is *first* given; and then He who has selected the stone and imparted the life will form and fashion it according to the good pleasure of His own will, for the place He designs it to occupy in the heavenly and eternal building.

After the Lord Jesus had expiated our sins "in His own body on the tree," and on the first day of the week

had risen from the dead, on the evening of that same day when the disciples were assembled together with closed doors, He suddenly came and stood in their midst, saying, "Peace be unto you." Having made peace by the blood of His cross, He thus early announces and imparts to them the peace He had made. He had come forth from the sepulchre and from among the dead as the LIVING STONE, and now takes His place among *these* living stones, who had been given to Him by the Father.

God is thus seen in His holy temple. The foundation provided in the everlasting counsels of God is now laid. Christ the first-fruits from among the dead is alive again, and "alive for evermore." In resurrection power and blessing He gathers to Himself and clusters around Himself some of the brilliant gems that are to shine with Him in the glory of God. Surely this is a specimen, a representation, of that holy temple where Christ and His elect are one—a beautiful exhibition of what the church should be *in time*, and what the heavenly temple will be throughout eternity. *In time*, between the cross and the glory, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." *In eternity* "the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God."

Blessed and happy as must have been the communion of Christ with His people after His resurrection, it was but of short duration, and only occasionally renewed, during the forty days that transpired ere He re-ascended to heaven. Then He must again in bodily presence be separated from them, and received back into the glory (which He had left for their sakes), to take His place at the right hand of power, and to assume the functions of another entirely new relationship which their new necessities required. He thus becomes the great High Priest for His people in God's presence.

They must have an Advocate with the Father — One ever living there to make intercession for them during the whole of their wilderness journey from Golgotha to glory.

As in the redemption of Israel out of Egypt the lamb must be slain, and the blood must be sprinkled, or the people must perish, so in the New Testament, the "Lamb of God" must die. His precious blood must be shed; it must be presented to and accepted by God, then sprinkled on the guilty conscience, or there could be no expiation for sin, no forgiveness to the sinner.

So also when Jordan was crossed, and Israel were in the land, the Captain of the host of the Lord assumes the command of God's heritage, and with sword drawn fights their battles, and leads them from victory to victory, until their enemies are destroyed or overcome, and quiet and peaceable possession is obtained of the long-promised and much-desired inheritance. Even so with our beloved Lord. He is the Captain of our salvation, made perfect through sufferings. "When He had by Himself purged our sins," He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, to serve us as faithfully in the courts of heaven as He had lived and served and died for us on earth, to watch over our interests with unceasing vigilance, to overcome all our enemies, and to become "a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God . . . and to succour them that are tempted." The personal departure of Christ from amongst His people was necessitated on this as on other accounts.

We see then clearly that "Christ the Son of the living God" is the Rock, the *one* and only *Foundation*, upon which the new temple can rest or be builded; also that the "*living stones*" are sinners saved by God's grace through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and partakers with Him of the blessings and glories of "the true tabernacle which the Lord

pitched and not man.” And surely we should be deeply interested in learning what provision God has made for His people, in the personal absence of His beloved Son, to ensure the greatest amount of spiritual blessing to them, and to produce the spiritual worshippers whom the Father seeketh to worship Him. According to our Lord’s own words, “ God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.”

Happily there is no lack of instruction in the scriptures of truth on this important subject. Satan’s imitations and man’s inventions tend indeed to mystify and puzzle the enquirer; but let the believer be true-hearted in his desire to *know* God’s will, *that he may do it*, and all is as clear as sunlight, and plain as God can make it.

The consideration of this part of our subject we defer until another time.

“ THAT I MAY APPREHEND.”

AN ALLEGORY.

THE strains of sweetest music reach my ear. With white and glistening robes a company of saints appears before my wondering eyes.

Each face is radiant. Methinks they reflect *His* face who stands amid that happy throng, “ the Chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely.” He is the source and centre of this brilliant scene; the songs from those ten thousand lips are all of Him; those harps all sound His praise.

I stood as one entranced, and as my eyes became accustomed to the light, I saw the white-robed ones more clearly, and watched them as they sung or listened to the rapturous sounds.

Some were as simple children, finding their delight in the sweet sounds, but scarcely comprehending them; overflowing with joy, yet content with but a portion.

Others pressed more forward; they seemed better to appreciate the harmonies, the undertones that blended

mournfully yet sweetly the perils of the past with the joys of the present.

Others again seemed verily entranced! They appeared to recognise the Master-hand in those notes of surpassing tenderness; they seemed to read *His* thoughts expressed in every chord; the music spoke to them of Bethlehem and Nazareth, Gethsemane and Calvary; of Him they loved once crowned with thorns, but now exalted, "*crowned with many crowns.*" And with hearts exulting in His joy, they bowed in speechless adoration; *silent* (Zeph. iii. 17, margin), with that depth of love to which words can give no expression.

* * * * *

The vision faded! What did it mean, that varying depth of joy, where all was joyous?—that differing measure in the vessels, though the smallest cup was full, and running over?

"Wouldst thou learn the meaning of the difference?" said a voice beside me; and at once I answered, "I pray thee explain it to me."

"Thou hast seen a vision of heaven. The robes of all that glistening throng were washed in the blood of the Lamb. All had owned Jesus the Crucified as their Lord and their God. They know that He died for them, and therefore His praise is the heaven of heavens to every one among them.

"But some were saved at the eleventh hour, and though they received the *gift*, they learnt little of the Giver; therefore they cannot enter so deeply into His love as others. Others have known him for many years, but they have followed only at a distance, and the lust of other things has too much occupied their hearts. They are upon the Rock Christ Jesus, and therefore saved; but upon the true foundation they have built 'wood, hay, and stubble,' and therefore suffer loss.

"It is those who knew Him best on earth, who have learnt to understand and love His thoughts and ways, that can enter most into the heights and depths of

heavenly joy. The music of His name enters their very being! Even on earth, to them, ‘to live was Christ,’ and words fail to tell their rejoicing adoration now.”

He ceased, and wild thoughts rushed through my mind; thoughts of the agony of missing aught of this joy. I cared not for the crowns, or for the glory, but for His love; and, forgetting that man’s thoughts are not His thoughts, I felt I could not brook another’s entering more deeply into His love than I, and that thus heaven would be no heaven.

But like oil on the troubled waters came the whisper of the Dove of Peace, “*Satisfied!*” “I SHALL BE SATISFIED!”

* * * * *

The spell was broken. *Each* will be satisfied that enters there. My Lord will care for me; I shall see HIM, and shall be satisfied indeed!

Yet not in vain had the storm swept over me; I had seen the differences of capacity of power to enjoy, and I longed to be able to appreciate the deep things of God.

I went to my Father, and besought Him not only to train and care for me as He had ever done, but so to lead me as to enlarge my powers of apprehension to the utmost.

The answer might be hard to flesh and blood; but power to drink deeply of the glory about to be revealed I felt must be possessed at any cost. I had caught the meaning of the words, obscure to me before, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, *worketh for us* a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;” and I felt I could trust the hand, the pierced hand, which in grace had so firmly taken hold of me, to lead by what paths He should choose into increased communion with Himself.

Not for myself alone would I desire this privilege. Joy shared is not joy lessened. And if the illustration

which so spoke to my heart speaks to thine, dear reader, it will not have been used in vain.

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; FOR IT IS GOD THAT WORKETH IN YOU *to will and to do* of His good pleasure,” “to fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power.” “FAITHFUL IS HE THAT CALLETH YOU, WHO *ALSO WILL DO IT.*”

THE SWEET SURPRISE.

Lines written on the sudden removal of a Christian to heaven.

No tender yet sad farewell

From his quivering lip was heard;
So softly he crossed, that the quiet stream
Was not by a ripple stirred.

He was spared the pain of parting tears,
He was spared all mortal strife;

It was scarcely dying—he only passed
In a moment to endless life!

So low was the Master's call,

That it had not reached *our* ear;
But *he* caught the sound, and *his* swift response
Was full of joy, *not* fear.

His friends were many, and fair

Were the blessings that strewed life's way;
Yet oh! to depart and to be with Christ
Was “better” than here to stay!

Weep not for his swift release

From earthly pain and care,
Nor grieve that he reached his home and rest
Ere he knew that he was there;

But think of the sweet surprise,
The sudden and strange delight

He felt, as he met his Saviour's smile,
And walked with Him in white!

Weep not! for his toils are o'er;

And *thy* race may as soon be run;
But with sandalled feet, and with staff in hand,
Let thy work for thy Lord be done.

And then when the message arrives—
Sudden it may be, or slow—

“The Master is come, and He calls for thee,”
With joy *thou* wilt rise and go!

"THE LORD'S SONG."

"How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

PSALM cxxxvii. 4.

IN the Psalm from which the words above quoted are taken, Israel is seen in her captivity. God had chosen her, He had set His love on her and He would never cast her off. He had chosen her not because she was more deserving than others, for she was utterly undeserving—none less deserving. "The Lord did not set His love upon you nor choose you because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; but *because the Lord loved you.*" And His heart never grows cold, His love knows no change. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

God's people however abode not in His love. He brought them out of Egypt, He led them by a right path, every day of their journeyings in the wilderness He "went in the way before them to search them out a place to pitch their tents in." (Deut. i. 33.) He never left them, never failed in His loving care for them, was never weary of blessing them. But they left Him. They had no hearts to be touched by His love, no eyes to see the evidences of His watchful care, His wise provisions for their daily needs. No occasion was too trivial to call forth their murmurings and complaints. No experiences of His gracious deliverances, of His all-sufficiency to meet every want sufficed to make them repose on Him and reckon on His sympathy and help, and trust His wisdom when new trials came, or old ones (compare Ex. xv. 22, with Num. xx. 2) came again. "They remembered not the multitude of His mercies," "they soon forgot His works," "they despised," "they believed not," (Psalm cvi.) and when, notwithstanding this terrible evil, God for His faithfulness' sake took them into the land

which He had promised to give them their ways towards Him remained the same. Year after year His patience waited: under judges, and prophets, and kings, when they rejected Him from being their king, He tried them, and at last when their iniquity was full, for their discipline and for their eventual blessing (for "all Israel shall be saved") He gave them over with a sorrowing heart into the hands of their enemies, and they were led captive to Babylon.

At Babylon our Psalm finds them. By the rivers of Babylon they sat down and wept: they wept when they remembered Zion. Now at length they could in some measure estimate the blessings which infinite long-suffering had so long continued to them: now by the sad and humbling contrast they could weigh and value what they had lost. And now they hanged their harps upon the willows—the harps that should have been used in the praise and adoration of God. "For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. *How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?*"

Beloved brethren for whom I write, there are many lessons for us here. May we be helped to learn some of them. May these things not have happened unto Israel in vain; may they not in vain have been *written for our admonition?* (1 Cor. x. 11.)

First let us all learn that God requires a song from His redeemed ones, that there is a song—the song of a life of gratitude, and praise, and thanksgiving, to which God is so surely and so exclusively entitled, that it is simply described as His. What do we not owe Him, we who were guilty, and lost, and ruined, and have been rescued, and reconciled, and loved; we who were Pharaoh's bond-servants, but have been delivered by a hand mightier than that which held us enslaved; we who have seen every Egyptian dead upon the seashore, and are now called and enabled to walk with

our God in the wilderness apart from all that would be offensive to His holiness? “O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever. *Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.*” (Psalm cvii.) What shall we render unto Him? He has set His love on us, He has purchased us with the precious blood of His beloved Son, when we were dead He gave us life, and now He is preparing us for His blessed presence. Every circumstance of the life of His dear child is ordered by His perfect wisdom and love; none shall harm us if we but commit ourselves to His protection; none shall lay anything to our charge, nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ, in every conflict; if we rest on Him, we shall be more than conquerors, and soon, very soon, we shall see Him as He is. Has not our gracious God then a right to expect from each one of us a holy, happy, uninterrupted, never-ending song?

But the song is often restrained and checked. Many of the heavenly family whom God has called out to be worshippers ever in His temple, “offering the sacrifice of praise *continually* (through all their lives), that is, the fruit of lips giving thanks to His name” hardly know what this blessed occupation is. Instead of melody in the heart there is heaviness. Self occupies the thoughts rather than the Lord Jesus. His love and grace have been little seen, or there has been little apprehension of the guiltiest sinner’s completeness in Him. Or perhaps the relationship of the dear child to the loving Father has been but little understood, or the heart has put its misinterpretation on the ways of Him who sees the discipline of chastening necessary and good in this wilderness for those whom He is making meet to be with Himself.

Or again, God’s beloved child has been taken captive by some of the many forms of evil which the enemy of souls has cast around his path. That which has

taken the place of outward testimony, in which Israel once stood; the wild olive tree which has been grafted in where the natural branches grew until they were cut off; the professing church which calls itself by the name of Christ—this indeed in all its forms has for its failure and carnality, its assumptions and pretensions, its hollowness and hypocrisy before God, been given over to a captivity from which there is no hope of return. We cannot even set up a second temple to be wept over when the first, which God once permitted His people on earth to rear, is remembered. We have passed the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, and such little seasons of corporate revival as the times and labours of these servants of God foreshadowed. The Lord is at hand. "Behold, the Judge standeth before the door." The Pharisee and Sadducee, the lawyer and chief priest, and scribe and ruler of the people, have taken the place of the sorrowing rebuilders of a house for the living God; and though the spirit of lawlessness may on this side and on that make a show of having escaped from the deserved bondage, which the humbled Israelite acknowledged and mourned, the chastened child of God can see nothing but dispersion, or the rule of Herod the Edomite, and of Herod's master. With the Lord about to appear, can we say that the years between Ezra and His advent in humiliation are yet to be passed before we shall see Him in His glory? It is not a time surely for any to say, "The temple of the Lord are we." It is not a time for any to say, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing;" but for us to learn how "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," is all that can be now in these last days set before God as a body which He may make His own habitation by the Spirit. Truly if there were help only in a return of the church to God—only in rebuilding that which has been destroyed—all would be hopeless.*

* It is indeed too true that we cannot visibly rebuild the

But there is no hopelessness for God's dear child. We can sing still, and sing to the end. When all is ruin and darkness around, it is our Father's mind that all should be bright and happy within and above. Our citizenship is in heaven, the citizenship of each redeemed and contrite one, whatever may be the captivity or dispersion of the church. When all that is outward has failed, the loving words are still heard, "If *any man* hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." And when all that sets itself up in the olive tree's place shall be "spued out" for its arrogance and carnal glorying, God's children individually wherever scattered may find "a door opened in heaven," and hear a voice saying, "Come up hither."

Let us then turn to our God. Of every lowly one that trembles at God's word it is true, though not of the self-satisfied Pharisee, that we are Abraham's seed and should not be in bondage to any. Other lords have had dominion over us; but our God will this day set us free, if we look to Him. Let us leave all strange lands. There can be songs in the wilderness (See Ex. xv.), and in the land of warfare (2 Sam. xxii.), but none in Babylon. The Lord's song cannot be sung there. The harp must there be laid aside. From thence no sacrifice of praise can ascend to give joy to the heart of God.

"*Strange lands.*" How many, alas! there are to tempt the straying believer's feet! The terrible world in all its varied forms lies spread before the eye, and through it the redeemed one can safely pass only by one narrow path marked out by Him who trod that way before. On either side, in all directions, are "strange lands." All that is strange to God is, or church *as a whole*, yet the Lord's promise (Matt. xviii. 20) abides to the end; and when few or many of the "strangers scattered" abroad (1 Pet. i. 1) gather to Him, they are "*built up* a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.)—Ed.

should be, strange to His child. And "all that is in the world, the desire of the flesh, and the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (1 John ii.) And the world has not merely its pollutions and deformities, but also its vanities and occupations, its mind and intellect, its objects and pursuits, its hopes and fears, its cultivation and refinement, its morality, and philanthropy, and religion. "Great Babylon" perhaps—the Babylon that holds God's people captive now—has heaped up within herself all that "is not of the Father, but of the world." A vast and wondrous display it is, and to the natural eye and heart of even God's own children how terribly attractive. There are temptations for all, deceits which wisdom from above alone can enable us to detect, and allurements before which all that is of the old man is powerless. As for the other cravings of the flesh, so for the natural religiousness of the fallen creature is provision made in this comprehensive development of man and the evil one. Having enslaved the people of God, Belshazzar can adorn his feast with "the golden vessels that were taken out of the house of God," and drink wine out of them, and praise "the gods of *gold*, and of *silver*, of *brass*, of *iron*, of *wood*, and of *stone*." Not content with the dominion under Satan of all besides, the false woman would usurp the place and character of the chaste virgin espoused to Christ. Read the description of her wares in Rev. xviii. 10-19, and let us heed the voice from heaven: "Come out of her, *my people*, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." Let us beware of turning aside the word of God, and making it of none effect for warning and blessing to ourselves by diverting it to others. None but the Holy One can show each one of us what Babylon's limits are, or how greatly in various ways it has enslaved us all. None can give power to come out, but He who says, "Be not conformed to this world."

There are other forms of evil which repress the song of praise; but when Egypt is left, Babylon is the great enslaver of the people of God.

“The Lord’s song.” Let us see that the song which we sing is *the Lord’s*. Many other songs there are, and these can be sung in Babylon. There is a light-mindedness, misnamed joy, which consists with the things which are of the world and not of God. In the midst of worldliness of heart and walk the Christian may have this; but it is not “the joy of the Lord.” It is not “joy in the Holy Ghost.” To this, distance from God and want of communion with Him are fatal.

The Lord’s song differs from all others, as in every other respect so in this, that we can sing it unceasingly. “Rejoice *evermore*.” “Rejoice in the Lord *always*.” Other songs cease when sorrow comes. Other joys fail when the need is greatest. But we can “give thanks *always for all things*.” For our Father is ordering all, and all is working for our good. So that under trial and affliction, when all the joy of earth flees, God’s child can sing. Captivity in Babylon stops the song, but the chastening of the Lord may but make it the more pure and clear. The Christian is “sorrowful, yet *always rejoicing*.” Yea, he can “greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, he is in heaviness through manifold trials.”

Let us then value this blessed privilege of offering up to God out of that which He has given to us, of making return to Him of the love and joy which He has shed abroad in our hearts. It is of His own that we render to Him, but even so He calls us to know the higher blessing, to give than to receive. Groans everywhere are heard. “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” The church can no longer sing the happy united song which once went up from her as a precious thing to God for a little while of old. But from each one of us sojourn-

ing on this polluted earth there may be ever ascending the psalm of praise and thanksgiving, a sacrifice acceptable and well pleasing to our long-suffering and forbearing God.

"The Lord's song." Let it ever be in our hearts and on our lips. Let us escape from all that would restrain it. How may we thus adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour! How effectually commend Him to all. And how helpful may our testimony then be made to the many among our brethren on all sides who need to know their Father as a God who gives fulness of joy, a God who satisfies.

"ONE IN CHRIST JESUS."

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

GAL. iii. 28.

THIS is an emphatic declaration of the oneness of all believers; *all*, without a single exception, *in Christ Jesus* their Lord. This one sentence gives to us the tenor and import of many unmistakeable, though perhaps less positive, expressions in Paul's writings.

"All one in Christ Jesus." Once in Him all distinctions fade away, all differences vanish. Uttered by a Jew, how strangely it must have sounded in Jewish ears; listened to by haughty Roman or fastidious Greek, accustomed to hold the sons of Israel in such contempt as scarcely to recognize their existence, how preposterous it must have seemed. How incredible in its condescension to an astonished Onesimus. And yet what a glorious truth it is, meeting all occasions, humbling pride in the dust, putting to shame false humility, giving to many believers, conscious of union with the Lord, perfect equality in the blessings and privileges thereby sealed.

But there is a point which at the present day needs an earnest, prayerful attention. The prejudices of race

and sex have passed away, but in their stead has risen up another as strong as any of these, as destructive of good, as much calling for stern apostolic rebuke—the prejudice of *sect*.

How can we say that we are one *in* Christ and yet refuse to be one *with* each other? Should not the cruel barriers between Christians vanish away before that word—“*one in Christ*”? In these days, when the ranks of the enemies of Jesus are so strong for evil, when they are so subtle in their tactics, and to all appearance so ever-increasing in number, how can we allow minor differences to cast a shade of coldness between us His disciples, to separate brother from brother, and compel us, sect by sect apart, to fight in feebleness against the common foe? In such a deadly struggle, are we to keep up a suspicious watch against *each other*, and to give by act or word so chill and distant a recognition, when all profess to be under the command of the same Great Captain?

Who can measure the reproach brought on the cause of Christ, the crippling of energy, the stunting of spiritual growth entailed on us His followers by endless prejudices and jealousies, which have so often at the very best allowed nothing warmer and truer than armed neutrality amongst Christians, and frequently sharpened the weapon of brother against brother, until the servants of the one Lord and Master have forgotten to combat with the common foe in their eagerness to smite one another?

Brethren, is it not more than time for us to give up these unworthy contentions? While holding fast what we honestly believe to be the truth of God, let us remember that we have a high and holy fellowship with every one, no matter what his or her name amongst men may be, who is a Christian—fellowship in its most complete sense, oneness in Christ Jesus—differing it may be in minor things but united in the one grand essential!

How well we can afford to let all else go by, to bear and forbear, to make allowance, to be pitiful, to be courteous, to waive our prejudices, while in heart-to-heart communion, our Master present in our midst, we mingle in soul-cheering intercourse with those between whom and ourselves there exists this *one* eternal link, the best and strongest of all, *union in Christ Jesus*.

How can harsh or judging thoughts be entertained one against another by those who feel this bond? Should we not join fearlessly in the same rank against the foe, or, if need be, unselfishly help one another should providential circumstances call some prominently forth into the field and leave others in comparative obscurity, though not in idleness?

Surely if what has been said is the truth—and who can doubt it?—we have all a part to do. Let us do it without delay. Let us put aside once and for ever the shackles that have too long hampered us, and stretch out kindly hands of brotherly greeting to all our fellow-believers, wherever they are to be found, by whatever name they may be known. Is a man a Christian? Is my Saviour his Saviour too? Is the atoning blood of Jesus his sole dependence as it is mine? Are we by union with Christ one in the Father's sight? Then assuredly we two ought not only to recognize, but gladly avow that so it is. Whatever keeps us asunder or cools or restrains our loving intercourse must be of evil origin.

Brethren, let us each look around, and not only be ready to avail ourselves of opportunities, but seek, nay make them, of intercourse with every Christian man or woman within our reach, high or low, rich or poor—opportunities not of mere kindly intercourse, though that has a use of its own, but of holy union and communion, *because* of our union in Christ.

Many have wearied and puzzled themselves over that hopeless problem, the construction of a common creed to which all could give in their adhesion. Vain

and profitless quest. How can any, even the most sanguine, dream of its success? Must then brother stand apart from brother at open enmity or with secret distrust, or at best extend a half-hearted friendship, until all conflicting claims can be adjusted and some meeting-point for the whole of Christendom be discovered? Or rather, blessed be God, is not that meeting-point already ours? *Christ our Saviour!*

If we are indeed one in Him, though on minor subjects our views may diverge, how perfect should be our mutual love; how all unworthy jealousy of each other should be swallowed up in fervent zeal for our Master's cause; how in its broadest, noblest sense we should be ready to enter into and adopt the apostle's words: "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another!"

FAITH AND LOVE

AS SEEN IN DAVID'S MIGHTY MEN.

2 SAM. xxiii. 8-14; 1 CHRON. xi. 10-19.

At the close of the past year, there appeared in the *Golden Lamp* some papers upon "David's mighty men," in one of which the writer well remarks that "several distinct lessons are often taught in a single portion of God's Word," and, after drawing attention to the energies of love in those "mighty men," very happily shows the cause of those energies, and exhorts to similar expression of love on *our* part toward *our* David, the Lord Jesus Christ. We would respond a hearty "amen;" for "whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee."

Did we but read the Word of God more as *listeners to His voice* than we are wont to do, how increasingly precious would that Word become, and the ear and heart being occupied with HIM, but little room would

be found for aught else; the serpent's hiss from beneath would be more readily detected, and the "name of the Lord," the "strong tower," be realised as the place of safety.

The reasons why Adino, Eleazar, and Shammah were placed as the "first three" in that list of mighty men given us in 2 Sam. xxiii. and 1 Chron. xi. may afford us subject-matter for further meditation.

We are told that "the three captains over the thirty (see margin) went down to the rock to David, in the harvest time, into the cave of Adullam," and that while there, hearing David long for a "drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem," they risked their lives to obtain it for him. For what length of time David sojourned in the cave of Adullam with those over whom "he became a captain," we are not told, but from 1 Sam. xxii. 5 it would not appear to have been very long; and thus we may get some idea of the *time* when Adino, Eleazar, and Shammah performed the mighty deeds recorded of them. I am disposed to think that it was *before* they joined David in the cave, *i.e.* before they took that distinct and positive place of fellowship with their rejected lord and king. This gives a deep character to their service, because the motive was *love to David*, combined with love for Israel, whom *they* recognised as *belonging to David*, notwithstanding all appearance to the contrary.

The Philistines, ever the enemies of God's people, no doubt took advantage of the distracted state of the kingdom of Israel, and on some particular occasion had come down in force upon them, but they found that God had not forsaken His people. *Adino*, seeing the danger, immediately stood forward as God's servant for His people, and "lifted up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time."

This was an energy of faith in God, and love to His people, that commands our attention. *Adino* appears to have acted *alone*, not in concert with any, and how-

ever great the service really was, no *visible* good to Israel seemed to result, and his service may even have been unknown to them. Without receiving *present* reward, Adino continued in his path of devoted service, and waited the day when David, who he *knew would* reign, should manifest *his* approval.

In the meanwhile opportunity was given for *owning* David in his rejection, and Adino went down to the rock to David unto the cave of Adullam, in the time of harvest," when the fresh air and genial warmth of the sun would have been much pleasanter *to nature* than the cold, dank, atmosphere of a cave in the earth's bowels. This was a very different motive to that which led those who were "in distress," "in debt," and "discontented" to gather themselves unto David, for *they* only did so to try what David would do for them. *Their* going to David was no honour to them, for they were brought to their "wits' end." The grace they met with *we* know how to praise God for, because at His hands we have received still greater.

I need not notice how the present "Israel of God" are in similar woeful circumstances *spiritually* to those of Israel in the days to which we are referring, and that Satan takes every occasion, as the Philistines did then, to molest and harass. May those to whom it is given to see his attacks seek to be like Adino, and not wait for others, but at once stand boldly forward, and in love to the Lord Jesus, and love for His people, energetically face the enemy. In His strength they will do mighty deeds, though none may possibly know of them, and no visible good result or present reward be received, save the blessed consciousness of His approval. Those who have *this* faith and love will await with patience the day when Jesus shall *reign*, and bestow His rewards; and in the meanwhile they will steadily and unhesitatingly take their place in the cave Adullam with their now despised and rejected Lord.

The character of *Eleazar's* service both as to time and energy of faith and love appears to have been very similar to that of Adino, though it may be that he needed *companionship* in order to do his work, for we are told that he was "*with David at Pasdammim*" when the Philistines gathered against Israel; whereas Adino seems to have had *a* faith that could work *without* companionship. (I refer to fellowship *in service* only, the literal companionship of some fellow-sojourner on earth.) Eleazar was, nevertheless, a very valiant man, and could fight in defence of the people of God until "his hand was weary and clave unto his sword; and the Lord wrought a great victory that day."

In this instance the result of the faith and service *was* known, for the people who had fled recovered from their fear and "returned after him *only to spoil*," Eleazar's faith and victory giving them courage. Different to his fellow-warrior Adino, Eleazar had a present reward, so far as seeing that his work brought "spoil" to his countrymen for whom he had wielded the sword. Probably without this he might have become disheartened and have failed to pursue the path of devoted service. God *is* gracious, and He *is* pitiful, and therefore to the man who *needs companionship* He gives it, and also present reward. Eleazar, like Adino, could then wait for David's full approval, and with him take his place in the cave with their rejected king.

Are there not some in the present day who in character answer to Eleazar, men who, seeing the advance of the great Philistine host of Satan (both in evil doctrine and practice), and the fear of the people of God at their inroads, join hands with some fellow-warrior to withstand their onward progress? They may not be able perhaps to face the enemy *alone* like Adino, yet in company with another they advance, and by such God often works "a great victory." The people of God, though fleeing like Israel, are ready when a victory is gained to own by whose hand, under God, it

has been wrought, and to follow to the spoil; and thus blessing redounding to the glory of God may be got out of the very evil which the devil sought to bring in.

Eleazar had no small *present* reward; and similar faithful followers of the yet rejected King may have this too, and may also be strengthened to "endure hardness" as good soldiers of Jesus Christ by remembering that "if we suffer we shall also reign with Him." (2 Tim. ii. 3, 12.)

The last of these three "mighty men," *Shammah*, gives us a third character of faith and service, but, as heretofore, *to* God and *for* Israel, and exhibits a *present* perception and a present energy much to be admired.

The declaration that the enemy were "gathered together for foraging" (see margin) gives us freedom to imagine that on this occasion they came suddenly upon Israel, and would have taken from them their *food*, their "lentiles;" but *Shammah* was on the alert; he had his armour on, and when the Israelites fled before the Philistines in the moment of imminent danger and need, he stood forth alone in the "midst of the ground and defended it, and slew the Philistines, and the Lord wrought a great victory."

Shammah may or may not have been thanked by his brethren of Israel for the service he had rendered, but he had looked unto the Lord, and He had used him; this was enough. There was no "spoil;" it was a battle of simple *defence*, and this object being accomplished, *Shammah* also, like the others, went to David in the cave, and with them awaited the day when he would openly show his approval of their service.

In *Eleazar's* case there had been a "*defying*" of the Philistines, an arising to give them battle, indicating steady purpose and forethought on his part, but the exercise of *Shammah's* faith was of quite a different character—it was that of instantaneous action.

As we have suggested parallels to *Adino* and to

Eleazar, may we not find a parallel to Shammah? Are there not true-hearted warriors still, who, though unable to act in, may I call it, the *lonely* energy of an Adino, or with the forethought and meditation of an Eleazar, yet when the devil would bring in aught that would take away the *food* of God's children, rise at once to oppose the invasion? Men thus on the alert and having their armour on are often used of God to preserve His children's food, and though reward is not *now* looked for, yet God's servants know they will have it, and therefore can wait patiently the time when "the Lord will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and *then* shall every man have praise of God." (1 Cor. iv. 5.)

It would not appear that these "mighty men" had accompanied each other to the cave, but that each had traced his steps there *alone*; for their service, I gather, had been found in different localities; but the secret was, their hearts had but one centre, and *therefore* they found themselves attracted to one and the same spot, even to David their loved and honoured, though hunted and persecuted, king.

UNITED SERVICE

AS SEEN IN DAVID'S MIGHTY MEN.

1 CHRON. xi. 15-19.

HAVING thus traced Adino, Eleazar, and Shammah to David's side, we may well notice that it is *not* from their own lips that we hear recounted their deeds of valour, but from Him whose "eye had been upon them." (Ezra v. 5.) Nor indeed are we aware that when they were with David in the hold, they did aught but watch his every word and look. We can hardly suppose that they were occupied with recounting their deeds of valour, though so wretched a thing is the flesh that it would have prompted them to do

so, and even to imagine that David could not do without them.

Be it as it may, David *tested* in wisdom the *source* from whence had emanated those mighty deeds. He "longed and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate," and immediately there gushed forth from each heart such true and fervent love to their king that they at once *united their powers*, "brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David."

As the *individual, personal* service to David, and for his people, of these honoured servants have in measure passed under our consideration, so now we may dwell a little on their *united* faith and service of love.

We can easily imagine how David's heart was gladdened as he heard from time to time of the prowess of his loving servants; but the measure of his heart's joy, now that they had risked their lives *together* for him, can only be expressed by the touching description of his appreciation of their joint service of love which is given us in the Word. "David would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord, and said, Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this; is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives?"

How gladly would Satan have acted upon their natures, and deterred them from this fellowship in service. How gladly would he have suggested to Adino that the character of *his* faith was of a different order to that of Shammah; that he was not fitted to work with him, or even with Eleazar, who needed companionship in order to work. Eleazar, too, might have reasoned that Adino did not act rightly in working so single-handed, taking no counsel with any one: Shammah also might have reasoned that his faith did not reach the standard of either of his companions,

and that he consequently was not fit to work with them. These and many such like evil thoughts would have had no difficulty in finding place, had these honoured men been previously occupied with *themselves* and *their* work, instead of with David.

The nature of the service that lay before them the adversary would surely have used to his advantage: he would have suggested that it was only to get a draught of water—was *this* a service becoming such men of valour as they were? True, the well might be at the gate of the Philistines' garrison, but what was that to men who had wrought such victories as they had?

But no place was found for Satan; their hearts were pre-occupied; their king engrossed their whole attention; every word, every look, every motion of his was their study, and *this* was their safeguard, and they were kept in "perfect peace, because their mind was stayed upon him."

So intense was their rivetted attention upon David, that his unexpressed *longing* or his *expressed* wish had the same effect upon them *all*, and with one bound of heart they sought to gratify it. They at once acted *in unison*—not now in their individual character as heretofore, but *together*: they brake through the host of the Philistines *together*, they reached the garrison *together*, they drew the water from the well *together*, and they bore it back *together* to their waiting, watching, anxious king.

Praise from any, save from David, could not be thought of; indeed none were there to give it, save a few poor "discontented" and "distressed" men whose praise could be of little value. Oh, no; it was not the desire of praise from men that moved them, but love to David which burned in their souls. To please him, to procure that which would refresh him, led them to cast every consideration aside, even the preservation of life itself, and to "count *all* things but loss." May their example stimulate many a servant of Christ

now-a-days, and may the language of Phil. iii. 7-11 be more abundantly entered into by us.

It is not unlikely that as we have pursued these meditations there may have passed before the mind the names of some who more or less may stand as parallels to those we have been considering. We may have thought of Luther, Wesley, Whitfield, and others even down to our own day—men who have withstood the tide of evil, and endeavoured to rescue precious truth from the obscurity in which the enemy had sought to bury it; and great and mighty has the work of many of them been. But alas! in vain do we look for a parallel to the *united* action; *that*, at all events in the present day, seems to be entirely forgotten. We may hope that our God has seen *some* concerted action, yet how seldom has it continued; and the heart of our adorable Lord Jesus is not refreshed after the same fashion that David's was.

Surely His servants must give room to some other guest in the heart than Himself, or it would not be that His longings, His expressed wishes, would be so little heeded.

REJECTION WITH CHRIST,

OR DAVID'S MIGHTY MEN.

1 CHRON. xi. 20-47.

IN the continuation of the list of David's mighty men some are *especially* noticed, such as Abishai, Benaiah, &c. The one could slay his three hundred with his own spear; the other could so rise above all opposing circumstances that he could put *self* aside entirely, and face the lion which would molest his kinsmen. The cold, the depth of the pit, the slipperiness, might have been very valid reasons to *nature* for remaining at home; but Benaiah rose above nature, and for the sake of others put aside his own personal comfort.

It is not, however, recorded of these that, like the "first three," they "went down to the rock to David, into the cave of Adullam." There were "mighty men whom David had, who strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom, and with all Israel, to make him king." They came to David, "to the hold," "to Ziklag," "to Hebron;" they owned him as king, and longed for his ascension to the throne; but they did not for love's sake thoroughly take the place of *rejection with him*.

Alas! how painfully is this like the state of many a Christian in the day in which we live. They *know* pardon and salvation by Jesus' blood; they know that though rejected He *is* the rightful King. They know that He *will* reign some day, and they have some measure of comfort and joy in the thought of His coming again. But when it is a question of listening to the apostle's admonition, "Let us go forth unto Him *without the camp*," they shrink and hold back,—they don't like *that*. "Bearing His reproach" is not pleasant, and they never take the place of "the cave of Adullam." Their *love* to their Lord does not rank with that of David's "first three."

If love to *the Head* be thus curtailed in action through earthly, fleshly consideration, no wonder that loving service to *His members* should be wanting. A *spurious* thing is but too apt to supersede the *real*, and so combination in work and service is frequently entered into by Christians *with the world*, the unconverted, to effect some "good end," some philanthropic purpose, and the "good" may be done, for God is wonderfully good and gracious; but it will "perish with the using;" it cannot stand; for it is short of that blessed high mark—the desire *to give pleasure to Jesus*. This was Adino's and the others' aim in reference to David. May it be more so with Christ's warriors now, and may our only desire be "to *please Him* who hath chosen us to be soldiers!" The "good"

will then fall into its proper place. Let us but serve our Lord aright, and we shall be sure to love His members aright, and desire to serve them.

The great apostle could say, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings *for you*, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for *His body's* sake, which is the church." (Col. i. 24.) Peter, John, and many an honoured one of lesser name, have shown the love they had to their Lord by true and devoted service for His church; and how many have even sealed it by their blood!

Although ages have rolled away since the Holy Ghost in the prophets testified of "the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow" (1 Peter i. 21), and though eighteen hundred years have passed since the session of the Lord Jesus at the right hand of God, when He entered those glories and became the "*head of the body the church*" (Luke xxiv. 26; Acts ii. 32-34; Eph. i. 20-23), yet the formation of that "*body*" has been continuing ever since, and is yet carried on (1 Cor. xii. 12), so that there is work to be done in its behalf; many a Philistine to be slain by any who, like Adino and his fellows in their love to David, have love enough to Jesus to serve His body for His sake.

The days may be, as they confessedly are, very dark, and fraught with both ecclesiastical and moral evil, and "the church," Christ's body, outwardly obliterated as compared with the day when God the Holy Ghost was *known* by manifested power to be in her midst, but though He has been "grieved" both in His indwelling collectively (1 Cor. iii. 16) and also individually (1 Cor. vi. 19; Eph. iv. 30), yet, blessed be God, He has not left the church to perish in her declension. (Jno. xiv. 16.)

The artifices of the devil have been unceasing to defile the church of Christ, even from its earliest days until now; and in the declension he has succeeded in

effecting, the church has as much turned from owning the *Lordship* of her glorious head as Israel turned as a nation from owning David as their lord. Nevertheless, even as David *lived*, though rejected, so does the precious Lord Jesus *live*, and that everlastingly.

We are told that in the "latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils" (1 Tim. iv. 1); "damnable heresies" shall be brought in among the flock (2 Peter ii. 1); "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Tim. iii. 13); while some "by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." (Rom. xvi. 18.) Happy are those Christians who cleave to the *living* though rejected Lord Jesus, and while looking upon the *scattered* Church, yet so love it for His sake that, like the men we have been considering, they buckle on their armour and courageously face the foul foes that arise in these "perilous times of the last days."

It is but little return to Him who *died* for us (this did not David) if we can in any small measure serve Him in serving those who are dear to Him. The Apostle John tells us that because He laid down His life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 John iii. 16.)

Let us not forget that the *present* is the *only* time wherein *warfare* service can be rendered. In the glory to which we are hastening all warfare will have for ever ceased. May many be able to say with Paul, "God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of His Son *without ceasing*" (Rom. i. 19)—and this word Gospel he uses to denote the "*whole counsel of God*"—and like him not count life dear so that the course and ministry received may be finished with joy. (Acts xx. 24-27.)

Instead of disjointed effort only, let us pray that there may be more *united* service, arising from the *right* spring; that there may be more men who shall "*keep*

rank, and come with a perfect heart to make David king" (1 Chron. xii. 40.) Such men, as to a present *visible* reward, may have none; but in a "little while," when the Lord Jesus shall come again to receive them *unto Himself*, to hear Him then say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," will *more* than compensate for *any* service, any trial, or any vicissitude by the way here below.

"Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men, knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ." (Col. iii. 24.)

Who can measure what the word "inheritance" comprehends? None. But we may well know that the *chief* joy of that inheritance will be to be *with* Jesus where He is (John xiv. 3, xvii. 24), and to "see Him as He is." (1 John iii. 2.)

"Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." (1 Cor. xiii. 12.) "Let us therefore lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race set before us, LOOKING UNTO JESUS." (Heb. xii. 1, 2.) AMEN.

THE FAILURE OF THE NAZARITE.

NUMBERS vi. 6-12.

WE have already considered the typical import of two particulars of the Nazarite's vow, and have learnt a little of the special joy and gladness of such voluntary separation unto the Lord. We now come to the deeply instructive and solemn lesson contained in the words, "All the days that he separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall come at no dead body."

The "dead body" apparently typifies *sin* in its length and breadth, both root and branch. It seems to gather up in *one* all the sins of our nature, both small and great; whether wilful, indulged, and delighted in; or accidental, occasional, and bemoaned. The con-

tact with death might be accidental or designed, necessitated or wilful, momentary or prolonged; but *all* equally caused defilement, and rendered the defiled person *unfit* for fellowship both with God and man. (Read Numbers xix. 11-22.)

Indeed so serious was such defilement, that even the uncleanness consequent upon the unwitting handling of a bone could not be removed under seven days; during which period the defiled person was cut off from all social intercourse, and not only had to purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, but must also have the water of separation (the purification for sin provided by God) sprinkled upon him *twice*; first on the third day, and again on the seventh.

Surely these stringent rules speak of the intense holiness of God, and tell of Him as One who cannot pass by sin, and who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." They are in perfect keeping with that pure and holy law, which though just and good in itself, could only bring curse and damnation upon a fallen creature. They speak of sin as so abhorrent to God, that it must not, it cannot be excused; and also show that no extenuating circumstances can mitigate its punishment, or alleviate its fearful consequences.

True indeed it is, that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." However righteous a person may be considered by his fellow-men, still that awful word resounds in his ears, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things which are written in the book of the law to do them;" "for whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all."

But *now*, blessed be God, "Christ is come, the Mediator of a better covenant, which is established upon better promises." The sacrifice of the Son of God has met all the requirements of God's holiness; and the love and mercy which were previously pent up in

His heart can now flow forth in unmingled streams of blessing, and God can find His full delight and joy in freely pardoning the undeserving, guilty sinner. Forgiveness *now* is full, and free, and instantaneous. No lengthened process is required. No seven days' quarantine. No oft-repeated sprinklings and ablutions. The blood of Christ avails to blot out every sin; and *all* who truly use that precious blood are cleansed at once from every spot, and made so pure and fair that God Himself can see no speck upon them.

“No condemnation:” O my soul,
 'Tis God that speaks the word;
 Perfect in comeliness art thou
 In Christ thy glorious Lord.”

This striking contrast between law and gospel, continually shines out in the Old Testament types, and is especially marked in the ordinances respecting the Nazarite's failure.

The Nazarite had “separated himself *unto the Lord*;” “the consecration of his God was upon his head;” “he was holy unto the Lord,” and therefore must *not* defile himself. Neither father, mother, brother, nor sister, must be permitted to turn him aside (verse 7).

How forcibly this reminds us of the words of the Lord Jesus, “He that loveth father or mother more than *me* is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than *me* is not worthy of me.” No relative, however dear, should have power to turn us aside from Christ. No affection, however strong, should succeed in leading us into any thing that would defile our souls. The one great paramount object of our lives should be, to love, and serve, and please our blessed Lord, and no one and no thing should be suffered to come in and hinder our true and hearty allegiance to Him.

But it is written of the Nazarite, “If any man die very suddenly by him” (verse 9). The Lord gives him credit for truthfulness of heart: he would not *willingly*

defile himself, but an accident befalls him, a man is struck down dead at his side. It was *very* sudden: he could neither foresee nor prevent it; still the head of his consecration is defiled, his vow is broken, and he is unclean.

No excuse can be accepted, but humbled and ashamed he must take his place as unclean, and go through the seven days' appointed process of cleansing. Still more, those locks which he had cultivated with such care, in hope of presenting them as an acceptable offering unto God (see verse 18), must be shaven off. They are defiled, and must be cast away as worthless. They are unfit for His altar, for nothing unholy or imperfect can be presented there.

Nor is even this sufficient. The appointed offerings must be brought, and atonement made for sin, *before* the priest can again hallow his head; and as he once more consecrated himself unto the Lord, and started off hoping to be able to keep his vow, the solemn words, like a death knell, must have sounded in his ears, "The days that were before shall be lost, because his separation was defiled" (verse 12). We cannot help feeling sorry for the Nazarite. It is apparently a hard case, and we can imagine how disheartened and mortified he must have been as he looked back on his wasted efforts and blighted hopes.

How different is it now! The law with its curse has passed away, and grace reigns through righteousness. The believer in Jesus is brought into the full liberty of the gospel of peace, and can joy in the riches of God's abounding grace.

If we are true Nazarites we shall not *willingly* defile ourselves. There will be no intentional contact with sin—no wilful turning aside from Christ. But however watchful we may be, not a day, no, not an hour, can pass without failure of some kind or other. The sin both within and around us is so strong and active that in thought, or word, or deed, we come short of what

we would be, and more or less the consciousness of having defiled the head of our separation creeps over our souls. The Lord Jesus *alone* could pass scatheless through this world. He was pure and holy in Himself, and there was nothing in Him that had any affinity to evil, or could in any degree have fellowship with it. He was indeed the PERFECT NAZARITE.

But what is to be done with our defilement? and what hope can we have of ever really pleasing our God when our slips are so frequent—our failures so constant?

Blessed be His name, He has foreseen and provided for it all, and in the Son of His love has not only given us a sacrifice, but also a great High Priest, who is ever ready and able to meet our every need.

Like the Nazarite of old, we must come before the Lord, and humbly shave off our locks—our love, our fruit, our service—and own that they are defiled, and unfit for His acceptance. But in striking contrast with the type, when we thus confess our failure, the precious blood of Christ avails, and puts it all away. Jesus, our merciful and faithful High Priest, takes forth the precious from the vile, divides between flesh and spirit, and instead of rejecting the whole of our service as polluted He gathers out of it *all* that has been the fruit of the Spirit, and having perfectly cleansed it from all defilement He presents it as a sweet savour to God, and treasures it up against that day when not even a cup of cold water which has been given in His name shall lose its reward.

How wonderful is the grace wherein we stand! As *we* shave off our hair in the true confession of our utter unworthiness, HE hallows our head again. As *we* speak of our sin, HE tells us of the blood that puts it all away. And as *we* bemoan our wasted strength and time, HE revives and restores our souls, crowns us with loving-kindnesses and tender mercies, sets us up on our feet, and cheers us to the race again.

The days in which we separated ourselves unto the Lord, though so sadly polluted, are *not lost*. The service we may have rendered, the fruit we may have borne, though marred, imperfect, and spoiled, is *not rejected*. No; He is not unrighteous to forget our work of faith and labour of love. *All* is remembered, *all* is cleansed, *all* is accepted, because of the preciousness of Christ, in whom we stand.

Such is our God! such is His grace! and such are some of the blessings of the new covenant which He has made with us in Christ Jesus our Lord. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust;" and the righteous claims of His holiness having been fully met in Christ, He is now able to deal with us according to the love and compassion of His own heart.

Surely such grace should stimulate our souls, and give us energy and faith to yield ourselves, spirit, soul, and body, unto Him; forasmuch as we know that our labour is "not in vain in the Lord."

THE BRANCH PRUNED.

JOHN XV. 1, 2.

BLEEDING like a pruned tree,
 Christian, it is well with thee;
 Sound and healthful in the Root,
 Thou hast borne a little fruit;
 So thy Keeper wise and good
 But removes the barren wood;
 Droop not—thou art in the Vine—
 Greater fruitfulness is thine.

Very painful though it be,
 Chastisement is good for thee;
 Rebel will, affections wild,
 Are not seemly in a child;
 So thy Father needs must show
 He would have thee holy grow:
 Kiss the rod, and take thy place
 As a true-born child of grace.

THE TWO ANOINTINGS.

“And, behold a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment.”—
LUKE vii. 37, 38.

THERE were two hearts occupied one with the other. The woman was occupied with Jesus. Jesus was occupied with the woman. She a sinful woman, regardless of all else, knew that in Him lay the power to give her rest.

Faith has an intuitive perception of its object; yet doubtless her faith had been generated by hearing His words and seeing His works. He who spake as never man spake had spoken to her inmost soul, had touched a chord in her bosom, causing her to seek Him who alone had a welcome for such as she was. She alone of all those at that feast understood Jesus. *She* was providing the feast for Him—that meat to eat which others wot not of. She was entertaining Jesus by drawing on His supplies of grace. She was pouring out the love of a broken and contrite heart so grateful to Him, who for such joy was about to endure the cross, despising the shame.

It was to get to *Him*, to show *Him* that she had understood His “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” that she thus daringly broke through all rules, desirous of giving vent to her affection—of pouring it forth on Him to whom her soul was so drawn, not deeming even the costly ointment expression enough to show her love; but melting into tears at His presence, forgetting all around, she was filled only with the desire of showing to Him, even thus mutely, how she loved Him.

Had He not shown grace to her? Had not those

words of pity she heard, as she hung an eager listener on the skirts of the crowd, wondering if there could be aught for her,—had they not been meant for such as she was? ‘I am heavy laden, I will go to Him and seek rest’—and she went.

Oh, rich reward—more than her heart conceived! She hears *Him* say, “Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.”

Thus does faith please Him! This is the feast He delights in; for the weary sinner to come and take of the water of life. “He *delighteth* in mercy.”

“Come, give me rest, and take
The only rest on earth Thou lov’st, within
A heart, that for Thy sake,
Lies bleeding, broken, agonized for sin.”

“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. Then said Jesus against the day of my burying hath she kept this.”—JOHN xii. 3, 7.

Martha is occupied with serving; Lazarus, happy in companionship; Mary provides the real feast for the Lord, not in the display of her love, nor in her attention to His person, but in her wondrous sympathy of soul with Himself. She was thinking of and had been thinking of the very thing that was so occupying His thoughts—she was thinking of the day of His burying, of His being “lifted up” on that cross. She could not as yet rejoice in hope of resurrection (though she might have), but she was in some measure entering into the meaning of that wondrous word He had uttered, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground *and die*, it abideth alone,” &c. She knew He was occupied in thought in this wise, though ministering, as was His wont, ceaselessly to those around Him by word and deed.

She could not express her love and sympathy in words. She brings her costly ointment (what precious enough for Him? is her thought), and anoints Him without a word. She knows He will understand her,

strange though her action seem to others. Her love intuitively knows what He likes—a reciprocity of love. She hears Him approve her deed, knows herself *understood*, hears besides that wherever the gospel is preached hereafter, this her deed shall be mentioned. Little expected she such rare reward; she sought it not, yet He gave it.

Thus does faith again feast the Lord. And many a time since these anointings took place have repentant sinners, and loving saints, refreshed their Lord and Master.

In the woman of Luke vii. we see the refreshment afforded by the repentant sinner, giving Him the joy of salvation.

In John xii. we see the refreshment afforded by the saint, having communion with His thoughts, walking *with Him*, understanding, appreciating, entering with joy into the thoughts He has regarding the salvation of the lost. Oh, to know *Him* more! to enter into His presence-chamber and hear His voice!

THE VALLEY OF ACHOR.

“A DOOR OF HOPE.”

JOSHUA vi. vii.

PRIOR to the first victory gained by the children of Israel in the land, we see God laying down the principle of His absolute claim and title to all that might result from victory. This marks Jericho and its history. It was the same claim put forth by God when He claimed the first-fruits of all Israel's increase, so that no one could partake of aught of the fruit of his toil till he had owned God's claim to *all*, and received as it were back from Him that which remained after God's share had been laid down at His altar.

Achan's sin was the violation of this principle, and

therefore virtually the setting aside of God's claim and the disowning of His right. The "wedge of gold," the "two hundred shekels of silver," and the "Babylonish garment" may have appeared very small matters to some, and so may the fruit eaten by our first parents, but we are taught in the garden of Eden and on the plains of Jericho to judge of things as God looks at them, and not according to man's misconceptions.

In like manner the defeat at Ai may have appeared a little matter, for the enemy only smote "about thirty-six men"—at the rate of three from each tribe, —and what was that among the six hundred thousand men of war who had just crossed the Jordan and seen the walls of the mighty Jericho crumble before them? The flesh would have said the loss of thirty-six men was *nothing*, as one looking on at the Fall, and hearing what Adam said to his God when he confessed that he was naked, might have said, "Is that all?"

Faith makes little of great victories, but makes much of small defeats. The former bears witness that God is *with us*; the latter that *we* are *not* with God. It is this that our hearts need to be more and more exercised about—our relation to God as resulting from a present faith in Him.

God's relation to us is unalterable: HE changes not. Ours to Him is alterable, because *we* change; and it becomes us narrowly to watch the vicissitudes there. Some call this legalism, and consider all such examination, and such an estimate of defeat, as a self-inflicted introspection that brings into bondage; but they forget that there is a faith that rises above all difficulties, as well as a faithlessness that casts off all fear.

This strong faith filled Joshua's soul with agony over a small defeat; and God's hero wept bitter tears in the dust before his God over a slaughter that the world's hero would have smiled at. It was a question between God and Israel, and Joshua dealt with it accordingly: he does not charge Israel with cowardice in

the battle; he does not think it the result of bad generalship on his part,—God had hid His face and he was troubled.

In victory and defeat Joshua stood consciously on holy ground: in the one and in the other he walked in the fear of the Lord, and the smallest token of His displeasure was wormwood to his soul; for faith in God made him deeply conscious of what it was to get out of the sunshine of His favour.

Could *we* realize this more, were our hearts more deeply conscious in this matter, we should seek “grace whereby we might worship God acceptably with reverence and godly fear,” knowing that “our God is a consuming fire.” (Heb. xii. 28, 29.) Yes, we need grace for *reverence* and *fear*, without which, it is a solemn thing to call HIM Father before whom we are called to walk, passing our “time of sojourning here *in fear*.” (1 Pet. i. 17.)

Alas! in how many is this great grace of “fear” wanting, and hence the terrible falls that again and again are allowed of God to make all hearts tremble, and which call for the same confession as came from the lips of the man of God, who, on seeing a culprit led to the gallows, said, “But for the grace of God there goes John Bradford.”

The more firmly our feet stand on the Rock of Ages the more need have we of this godly fear, to correct the presumption of the flesh that would ever take advantage of the grace of God, and darken the latter days of good men now, like those of good king Hezekiah, obscuring with clouds of sorrow, and filling with regret the closing hours of the dying saint.

The higher we rise the deeper we have to go down, else the first storm of temptation will lay the rootless tree low. God’s grace provides against this as in the case of His servant Paul. When He gave him those unutterably glorious revelations of which we read in 2 Cor. xii. He gave him also a thorn in the flesh—the

messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure.

The question may be asked, Why not uphold without the messenger of Satan? It cannot be. God holds us up, not as the worlds are upheld, *from without*, but *inwardly*. In the fellowship of our soul with HIM, He strengthens us by His Spirit in the inner man, and enables us to stand in conscious living and abiding in Him, sustained from within by a power that grows in the soul and does not act mechanically from without. We do not for a moment deny the external upholding of His creatures by the Creator; but as spiritual beings we know that our upholdings are altogether of another character, and are directed to deeper and holier ends.

But to return to Joshua. His prayer in chap. vii. 7, 8, 9, calls for our careful perusal. The sum of all was God's great Name, the lustre of which had been dimmed by this little defeat. He would rather have dwelt in the wilderness with God, than in the land to be subject to the Canaanites. How unlike this to the desire of the rebellious people who would have dwelt in Egypt without God rather than in the wilderness with God.

Under the sense of the great shame of a little defeat, Joshua was fallen on his face before God, and God calls him to arise, tells him what to do, and presents *Himself* to him as the remedy in defeat, as previously He had presented Himself as the captain of the Lord's host to lead on to victory.

We have to bring our defeats to God, and humbled before Him in the valley of Achor, we have to learn that while God remains, *hope* remains; a hope however that can only rise above the ashes that have consumed the accursed thing,—Achan and his ill-gotten spoil. God had been appealed to. God had found out the secret thing, and He brought it to light, for "that which maketh manifest is light."

The saints of God need much to be exercised about

hidden evil in themselves, and to pray with the Psalmist, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults." This dealing with God about hidden things precedes the prayer to be kept from presumptuous sins, and then the assurance is given to the soul, "Then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression." Deep concern for the hidden and secret condition of the soul is the only safeguard against open and overt evil, the only guarantee to that uprightness of soul which is essential to all godliness of life and walk.

That which had been the occasion of sin, and the one who had committed the sin had to be burned together, according to the New Testament precept, "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee." So Achan and all belonging to him, and the gold, and the silver, and the garment were taken to the valley of Achor and burnt with fire, and there "unto this day" is there "a great heap of stones," a witness to Israel of the bitterness and sorrow of all departure from the living God, and a witness to *us* likewise, that we lust not after those things of the world which God has devoted to destruction. "Achor" signifies *trouble*, and into this valley we must go, and burning all our idols, and burying all our lusts we learn the terrible-ness of falling into the hands of the living God.

But here the scene suddenly changes. "The Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger" and "said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed." The assuring words spoken in chapter i. are repeated with reassuring power to the man of God, and he learns the deep, sweet truth that "Achor" is given for "a door of hope" (Hos. ii. 15.), and thus we come to the blessed knowledge that though sin is the way *into* the valley, there is also a door of hope leading *out* of it.

When sin has done its worst, and the soul seems to have got far away from blessing, there is nothing so important as to remember the way of blessing and to

be content to pass through the valley of trouble. There is no royal road, but thank God there is a road to the repentant soul—repentant “according to God”—a road that is ever available.

Israel *had* sinned, but found *there* the door of hope, and blessing, and were again allowed to go on without fear, for God was again on their side.

It is *here* that Israel will be brought in the latter days, and be taught to sing as in the days of their youth, as in the day when they came out of the land of Egypt. They shall be able then to sing of redemption, and the long forgotten song shall come back in all its freshness and power.

These lines may meet the eye of some backslider, of one who is disposed to say, “There is no hope.” To such may they come as a voice from heaven whispering “*There is hope:*” but the door of hope is found nowhere else than in the valley of Achor. To those who say, “There is no hope: no, for I have loved strangers and after them will I go;”—to such there is indeed no hope, nothing but “a fearful looking for of judgment which shall devour the adversaries.”

There may be also many who, looking at the present condition of the church of God, are prone to pronounce it hopeless; but no, dear child of God, there is no hopelessness where God is, and God is with us ever, even unto the end of the age. He who as He ascended up on high gave us that ever memorable promise, “Lo, I am with you always,” knew all that would intervene in the eventful and sad history of His people on earth; yet knowing it all, He gave the promise. The whole glory and power of the dispensation rests on this promise of the assured presence of the church’s Head with His church, through to the very end, when He will gather His people home unto Himself, that where He is there they may be for ever.

Many need to be reminded that at the end of a dispensation, when man has most thoroughly failed, the remedy

is the same as at the beginning. We find this hard to believe from the fact that our minds are occupied with *ourselves*, rather than with God. God's dispensations *never fail*, for they centre in *Himself*; and while "the God of hope" remains, we are called "to abound in hope in (*ev*) the power of the Holy Ghost." The past Babylonish history of Israel is of the deepest interest to us in the present day, when a Haggai and Zechariah ministry is particularly needed.

There are those who say all is right and no change is needed; there are those who say all is wrong and there is no hope. Both are alike at fault; for our remedy is in the confession of our failure and faithlessness, confirming our confession with the burning of our idols in the valley of Achor, and also by maintaining an unswerving confidence in God's unfailing presence and His unchanged faithfulness. We must each one bring our own wedge of gold, and our own Babylonish garment, and burn them before our God; thus we shall be prepared for increased blessing, and God Himself will take His *own* place in our midst, and manifest Himself as the God of victory.

Thus in the prophet Haggai we read, that when Israel arose from their unholy disregard to the house of God, and from their unrighteous regard each of his own house, when their spirit was stirred up and they went to the mountain for wood and stone to build the house of their God, then, though not before, God sends the precious words, "Be strong," yes, be strong in weakness; "for I am with you . . . according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not."

Israel might have replied, as many are apt unbelievably to say *now*, "This cannot be, for the ark is gone—the Shekinah has disappeared—the Urim and Thummim are no more;" but what are such thoughts but putting God out of His place, robbing Him of His

glory, and confusing the outward manifestations of His presence with the reality of that presence itself? God was with them, though the ark had disappeared; the blessing of the priesthood remained, though its external and characteristic mark had gone. Let us repeat it, *God remains*; but as Haggai foretells—all is to be shaken—all in the world—all in the church—all in the individual believer; that that which is of God and cannot be shaken may remain.

May the Lord strengthen our hearts and confirm our hands in every holy purpose and work; may we rise above all despondency, seeking only to get down into the valley of trouble, and there to deal faithfully with ourselves and with our God, that the words of comfort spoken to Joshua may be spoken into the depths of our souls: "Fear not, neither be dismayed." We shall then find Ai an easy victory, and its spoil given to us in witness of the light of His countenance being on us again in all its plenitude of blessing.

PRIESTLY CLEANSING AND SERVICE.

HEBREWS xiii. 15, 16.

ALL believers are priests unto God. They are washed, clothed, consecrated, and fitted to have fellowship with God, fitted and qualified by God Himself.

All this is beautifully brought out in Leviticus viii. There Aaron representing Christ, and his sons representing all believers, are *washed together*. (See verse 6.) The washing of the sons is as complete as the washing of Aaron. It was performed by Moses in *God's way*, and by *God's direction*. So the Lord Jesus in grace was numbered with the transgressors, He was counted such as we are, made sin for us, and bare our sins in His own body on the tree.

But His death washed Him from it all, and us *together with Him*; for we died with Christ, and as

washed ones we live *in Him*. Colossians i. 22 shows us the completeness of our washing from the old Adam nature. Hebrews i. 3 gives us the cleansing of our sins, that is, our washing from the *doings* of the old Adam nature by Christ, who first descended to do it, and then ascended to the right hand of the majesty on high, "when He had by Himself purged our sins." Having received the testimony of the Spirit, we are even *now* clean through the word which He has spoken unto us.

In Leviticus viii. all that qualified Aaron and his sons for the service of God was provided by God. The robes for Aaron's sons were made by those to whom God had given wisdom for the work. (See Exodus xxxvi.) Those God-made garments were put on by God through His servant Moses. The sin-offering and the burnt-offering were provided also by Moses acting for God, and these God-provided sacrifices gave rest of conscience to those who were sinners by nature, and furnished a sweet savour to God on behalf of those who *in themselves* had none.

If we are called into the light of God's presence, it is in view of the *blood*. If we recognise sin there, there is in the person of Jesus the remembrance of Calvary and the sin-offering; and He is there as "Christ Jesus the *righteous One*" for us, in whose flesh dwelleth no good thing.

All this involves that we are a *purchased* people; and so in Leviticus viii. 23 we see Aaron's sons reminded that the blood which gave them rest and title to the presence of God bought them for God—the ear, the hand, the foot, are all marked with blood. They are no longer to listen to the voice of Satan, but to God's word; no longer to work according to the world, but to labour for God; no longer to go on Satan's errands, but on the service of their God.

But what can helpless worms as we are do for God? In our own strength nothing; but listen to His voice,

“Fear not, I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art *mine* ;” and so in Leviticus viii. we learn that the oil was put upon Aaron’s sons. That precious anointing oil of which we read in 1 John ii. 27, which teaches us *what* to do and *how* to do it, is the Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

This priestly standing is the portion of *every believer* ; we are “built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” We are “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that we should show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.”

As priests, then, we act in a double aspect toward God and toward man ; as it is put in Hebrews v. 1, “Every priest taken from among men is ordained *for men* in things pertaining to God.

In Hebrews xiii. 15, 16 we see this double aspect. *To God* we are to give the fruit of our lips, owning Him as the source and strength of all we are and do. Ere Aaron’s sons could do aught for God, they must own their ability as of God, using the sacrifices, the laver, and the garments God had provided, and surely as they remember how they got them love would fill their hearts, and praise come forth from their lips. Apart from Christ we are nothing, and apart from Him we can do nothing. Our garment is Christ, and everything that fits us for the service of God is seen and provided only in Christ.

Aaron’s sons’ garments of fine linen typified Christ the righteous, the holy One, and God saw them as clothed in Him in figure. They could not attempt to offer *as men*, but only *as priests*. So, beloved, we are to offer lip-praise, *not as men in the flesh*, but in the array of *Christ*, that so our praise may ascend through and by Him to God.

The Lord Jesus in John xvii. gives us the pattern of

these two verses in Hebrews. Truly He comes *by Himself*; "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work given me to do:" but the Father has the praise; He confesses His name, and owns Him as the one who had given Him power over all flesh. Thus ere atonement was made He stood the anointed offerer, even as Aaron was clothed and anointed before the blood was shed. But having given praise to the Father, He as perfectly communicates to us what He receives from the Father.

This is what we are called to; we are to "offer to God the sacrifice of praise continually," but we are also "to do good, and to communicate," "Do good unto all men, specially unto them who are of the household of faith." For this purpose we are to present our bodies a living sacrifice, for we are not our own but God's; and it is the mercies of God alone which can move us to this. (Rom. xii. 1.)

So was it with Mary in Mark xiv. It was the thought of Isaiah liii. 6 which constrained her to anoint Jesus unto the burying. Some may say it is "waste," but Jesus discerned "faith working by love." An engine goes well with the steam up, but take away the steam and it lies a helpless piece of iron; so faith can only work *by love*. Love is the motive power, and the Spirit of God alone is the author of love.

Is it not something for a soul filled with the love of God to do something for God? Surely it is; we do not seek to please Him in order to be saved, but we are to seek, by the power of the Spirit, to please Him because we *are* saved. Jesus went about continually doing good; and, beloved, the Holy Ghost, the power by which He did so is in us also, and we need but to *yield ourselves* to His mighty power and, as it is expressed in Hebrews xiii. 20, He will work in us "that which is well-pleasing in His sight."

It is a blessed thing to know His will, to know *wherein* we may walk well-pleasing to Him. Paul

prays in Colossians i. that the saints may *increase* in the knowledge of His will, that they may "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." And in Ephesians v. He exhorts them not to be "unwise, but understanding *what* the will of the Lord is." Just as we follow the *will* of the Lord do we get the testimony of the Word that we *please* God.

In Philipians iv. this testimony of the Spirit is given to the saints. Paul had been in need, and they ministered to that need, felt not only by *Paul* but by the Lord, and in verse 17 it is spoken of as fruit to their account; for even a cup of cold water to refresh His own passes not unnoticed by the eye of His love. Accordingly in Hebrews vi. 9, 10, we are told that God is "not unrighteous" to forget their work and labour of love, which had been shown *toward His name*, in that they had *ministered to the saints*, and did minister. What wondrous grace! God Himself says, He would be *unrighteous* to forget what is ministered to His saints, and in verse 9 the Spirit of God speaks of this ministry as the *necessary accompaniment of salvation*; so that the more we enter into and enjoy salvation, the more shall we be in every respect like Him who came "not to be ministered to, but to minister."

In conclusion we have not the Lord Jesus to minister *personally* to, but He has left His members here, that *through them* we may manifest our love to *Him*. And though our David be not seen by the bodily eye as the one longing for refreshment (2 Sam. xxiii. 15), yet *faith* will ever discern in His weary members and faithful servants the objects on which to lavish our love to Him, by ministering *as to Him* of the manifold grace of God, and just as we love our Lord shall we meet their need. He has said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words;" and this is His commandment, that we love one another *as* He has loved us.

CONSIDER HIM.

PART II.

In the four Gospels we may study the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ in every minute detail of a lowly life on earth.

In them we may make acquaintance with One who in the garb of man lived and moved amongst men according to the manner of the time. Our lesson is taught in homely language, so to speak. God is manifest in the flesh, and so manifested as not to alarm the spectator with unapproachable glory, but to invite and win him by mild and tender attractiveness.

Glory there was to eyes of faith in every syllable **HE** uttered and act **HE** performed; but that glory was unobtrusive, and often purposely concealed. But where any were willing to discern Him, He was easily discerned by the Spirit's enlightening power.

As an illustration of this: A painter having conceived the desire to represent his ideal of perfect humanity, took the Lord Jesus as his model, believing that if he could represent His character in the countenance, his object would be gained. With this object he began to study the Gospels. He had not read far when the supernatural beauty of that blessed One began to dawn upon him. He read on in intense admiration and wonder, till overpowered with the surpassing splendour of the divine character before him, he fell upon his knees exclaiming, "My Lord and my God," and became thenceforth His loving and faithful disciple.

What we learn of Christ in the Gospels is chiefly personal. Our affections and sympathies are drawn out towards One whose love and whose sufferings were most intense.

In the Acts and Epistles the glory presented to us is not so much personal as official, if I may use the word. His work, His offices, His present, and future

manifested glory, majesty, and power, are plainly declared. He is no longer the suffering and unrecognized mechanic of Judæa, but is known in His true dignity.

The difference seems to be that in the Gospels we are in company with the Lord as He moved through the world, humbly and unknown, except to a few. His glories are veiled except to faith. No trumpet tongue proclaimed the presence of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; and it is only as we are enabled by the Spirit to discover in gracious words, in deeds of mercy, and miraculous deliverances the dignity of His blessed Person, that we can learn our lesson. In the Gospels we have to believe in spite of appearances; that the plain man of Galilee and Judæa is the Son of God. But in the Epistles we learn otherwise. There no secret is kept, no mystery reserved. The Spirit tells us plainly of Christ, "He shall take of mine, and shew it unto you," is fulfilled.

ROMANS shews Him forth as the propitiation and atoning sacrifice through which God and man are declared righteous, and made at one.

GALATIANS reveals Him as the true seed of Abraham and the fulfiller of God's ancient promises.

EPHESIANS opens out the glories of those who are saved by virtue of union with One so glorious.

COLOSSIANS unfolds Him as Head of His body, the church, and first-born of every creature, the habitation of all fulness, and the pre-eminent Head of all things.

PHILIPPIANS explains His extraordinary descent to the depth of humiliation, His present exaltation, and future appearing.

THESSALONIANS further develops the details of His promised return for His church, and to His kingdom.

In HEBREWS especially, from beginning to end, Christ is before us. All types are found to point to Him, all shadows to give place before Him. The solemn sacrifice, the priest in his beautiful attire, and the temple,

glittering with gold; all come to an end and disappear, and no place is found for them when once He, their more holy and more glorious antitype, appears. The angels, sinless, glorious, exalted beings as they are, are here shown to be less worthy than He. Heaven and earth are His handiwork, and therefore less than He.

Moses and Joshua, Aaron and Abraham, patriarchs and priests, each and all are brought forth in this epistle, to stand for a moment beside the Lord of glory, and then to fall back with no glory, "by reason of the glory that excelleth." (2 Cor. iii. 10.) Yea, all that was hitherto highly esteemed amongst men, even because of its heavenly origin, must pass away, and be as nothing, now that God has brought forth from the treasure-house of His tabernacle, the brightest and best of His gifts to man, and that He who in the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, has in grace incomprehensible taken upon Him the seed of Abraham, and is not ashamed to call us brethren.

In PETER we discern affectionate recollections (by one who had been much forgiven) of the patient, suffering, and atoning Lamb of God.

1ST JOHN is full of Christ. So full that in several cases the apostle speaks of Him without naming Him, as though everyone must be as much occupied with Him as he was himself. He would teach those who had not known Jesus while on earth what He was whom John had heard, and seen with his eyes, and looked upon, and his hands had handled, that they might have fellowship with him in His knowledge and love.

REVELATION opens the eventful future of Christ's return to earth to take His great power and reign, while its earlier chapters contain the affectionate appeal of the Lord of Glory to His church on earth still in His absence to give Him THE FIRST PLACE IN THEIR HEARTS.

The prominent place given to the Lord *Himself* is very observable in the Epistles. The sacred writers, as guided of the Holy Ghost, turn from their subject, as it were, at some mere allusion to Him, to dwell on His praise, or to describe His character or work, showing that though they may be occupied in unfolding some doctrine, or inculcating some needful precept, it is still the *Person* of the Lord that most occupies their hearts.

Many passages that are very marked in this respect begin with the word "Who;" so that this little word is like the finger-posts in countries where the scenery is visited by strangers, to point them to some lovely spot from which the beauties of the landscape may be best surveyed.

For example: In Col. i. 13-20, what a glorious and expansive view that little word points to where from redemption by blood up to the height of glory, the fulness and pre-eminence of Jesus is displayed for our admiration and worship. It is a passage to pause at, meditate upon, and inwardly digest.

Look also at Phil. ii. 6-11. "Who being in the form of God," &c. This is the other side of the scene, and here is Christ's descent to humiliation, as the other gave His ascent to glory. What a rich and wonderful display; a passage perhaps surpassing in grandeur almost anything in Holy Writ.

Again, Heb. i. 3. "Who being the brightness of His glory." Long might we pause to study the revelations of this one verse. But I am only pointing out the pastures, leaving the reader to feed upon them.

We find a notable "Who" in Heb. v. 7; and yet another in chapter vii. 26. And if we refer to the verses from which the heading of this paper is taken in Heb. xii. 2, 3, what a scene that little "Who" introduces to us! "Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

1 Peter ii. 21-25 is very familiar to us all, with its oft-repeated "WHO" as the spirit carries the apostle's heart along from glory to glory in the contemplation of the Lord.

Enough has been said perhaps to show how in the study of the epistles we may learn Christ, and maintain a personal communion with HIMSELF, as He is there wondrously and variously presented to us. And oh, may God grant to us, His children, this chief grace in a day of much superficial religion; to let all interests, and all friendships, and all ambitions give way within us, and be as nothing in comparison with maintaining uninterrupted and undiminished secret fellowship and intercourse with the Lord Jesus Christ; so that when we meet Him in glory presently, we may meet a well-known and familiar friend, whose acquaintance does not remain to be made, and whose love has been often proved.

SALVATION IN ITS THREEFOLD ASPECTS.

WE may look at salvation in a threefold light.

1st. Salvation from the consequence of sin. (Acts xvi. 31; Eph. i. 7, ii. 8; Col. i. 13; 1 Tim. i. 15; 2 Tim. i. 9; Titus iii. 5.)

2nd. Salvation from the power of sin. (Matt. i. 21; Rom. v. 10, vii. 24, 25; Heb. vii. 25; Jude 24.)

3rd. The salvation of the body, the consummation of salvation. (Rom. viii. 23, xiii. 11; Heb. ix. 28; 1 Peter i. 9.)

It is well to have a clear apprehension of these aspects. It is well to know there can be no failure in God's salvation. It is well to know that salvation is not a mere escape from justly-merited wrath, but also a preservation from the power of that sin which calleth down death and wrath.

In Jesus Christ crucified and risen ample provision

has been made to atone for the guilt of sin, and to preserve from its power.

The power of the new life in Christ Jesus precludes the power of sin and death from working dominantly after the sinner has received Christ as Saviour.

Mere pardon is not God's sole object in salvation, but is preparatory to His further objects, "that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, *in holiness and righteousness before Him*, all the days of our life,"—that a people should be formed for His own praise, a new creation in Christ Jesus, of which He should be the first-born, the first-begotten from the dead, the first-fruits.

The final salvation or redemption of the body is but a necessary consequence of His action to us-ward who believe in Him; but an entering on His part into the full possession of His purchased property.

Salvation from *death* as the consequence of sin is accomplished by His having been "made a curse for us," "who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree."

Salvation from *the power of sin* is accomplished by Him who now liveth at God's right hand, "able to save to the uttermost," our "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." He lives on behalf of His people, to *save them from* their sins, "to sanctify and cleanse" them, to keep them from falling, and present them faultless.

The salvation or redemption of *the body* will be accomplished when the Lord returns to claim His own, to receive them to Himself. "When Christ our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory." "Who shall change these bodies of humiliation, that they may be fashioned according to His body of glory," when the dead in Christ shall be raised, and the living caught up "to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

THE CLOSING WORDS OF THE FOUR GOSPELS.

THE four biographies of Christ, called "the four *gospels*," are full of good tidings from beginning to end; they run over with wonders and blessings; for of HIM it was prophesied, "His name shall be called Wonderful;" and again, "men shall be blessed in Him." Each gospel is brief, each has its distinctive character and peculiar style, and from each we learn something not recorded by the rest.

But we will now look at the closing sentences of each, and compare and interweave these very remarkable testimonies, so as to leave a general view of what the Lord Jesus said and did, when just leaving that earth on which for more than thirty-three years He had lived a life of spotless purity and self-sacrificing benevolence; and where He had died a sacrificial death—all for the salvation and eternal life of sinners. The last three verses of Matthew, two of Mark, four of Luke, with John xx. 30, 31, and xxi. 25, will furnish material for our meditation.

What lover of divine truth has not felt a sacred spell cast over him as the closing words of these grand harmonious gospels have fallen on his ear, and distilled on his heart. The words of the poet have fitly described his feelings:

"The angel ended, and in Adam's ear
So charming left his voice, that he awhile
Thought him still speaking, still stood fixed to hear."

Yes, let *us* still stand to hear; for though we may not expect to have any addition made to the revelation already possessed while in this world, yet we may look for the Comforter, the glorifier of Jesus, to show us more of His excellencies, and to plant in our hearts those germs of truth of which the words and acts of the Incarnate One are so full.

Four objects meet our view as we contemplate the closing words of the four gospels.

I. The friend of sinners at the right hand of God.

II. A fountain of joy in the desert, which should ever flow on.

III. A field of labour which will always yield a rich return.

IV. A fulness of truth and sympathy which can never be exhausted.

The evangelist Mark writes as follows: "So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." Here we have two things connected which do not often meet in the great of this world, *i.e.*, *ministry* and *majesty*.

What a transition from standing on our sorrowful earth conversing and teaching, to sitting on the right hand of God! He who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and who ministered to the souls and bodies of men so untiringly and lovingly, is now seated on the eternal throne, "angels, principalities, and powers, being made subject unto Him;" and these He sends forth to minister to His feeble people.

Thus did God reward His faithful service, and honour His obedience unto death, "even the death of the cross." The sacred writers exult in the exaltation of Jesus; the testimonies on this point are very remarkable and extremely numerous. Let us seek fellowship with them in their adoring joy, that the Lamb once slain is "the Lamb in the midst of the throne;" that one in our nature is Head over all things to His Church.

The *circumstances* connected with the fact of the Lord's ascension to heaven are recorded by the third evangelist. (See Luke xxiv. 50-53, and Acts i. 9-11.) Here, as in many parts of the Lord's earthly history, we see tenderness and triumph harmoniously blended. He was a loving friend to the last, giving sweet counsel to His followers. He was the great High Priest about

to enter within the vail, and His parting act was "blessing His disciples." "As He blessed them He was parted from them, and a cloud received Him out of their sight."

Thus He, whose lowly birth, whose sinless childhood, whose manhood of humble labour, whose ministry, miracles, death and resurrection are so graphically described in the preceding pages, ascended into heaven. And He who lay in the manger, who worked as a carpenter, who went about doing good, who agonized in Gethsemane, who died on Calvary, and who lay in Joseph's tomb, is on the throne of God. What a proof is this of His divinity; what an attestation from God to the value of His sacrifice; what may we not hope for from His presence in heaven, and His prevailing intercession there! Nor should we fail to remember that among His last words on earth we have the glorious declaration, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

II. And thus on earth (in many respects so unlike heaven) a fountain of joy sprung up which should continue to flow on for ever.

Those disciples whose hearts were a little while before filled with sorrow, when Jesus only *spoke* of going away, were now "exceedingly glad," though He had actually departed from them. They loved Him more than ever, and He had no longer to say of them, "If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I said I go unto the Father." They were becoming more intelligent believers; they could ardently love an *unseen* Lord; they now knew somewhat of the design of His mission, the nature of His work, the reason for, and results of His death. After the cloud had received Him out of their sight, and He had passed beyond the deep blue sky, and the angels had assured them that He the *same* Jesus would come again, "they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy."

The joy was great during the ten days which elapsed

between the ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, but it was greatly increased when the Comforter came in *power*. The history of the early church shows that Christians were a very joyful people. Persecution, poverty, trials of all kinds could not hinder their joy; it was irrepressible, it was sanctifying; the joy of the Lord was their strength. "The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost," and the Lord Jesus saw in them the desire of His yearning heart fulfilled. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may remain in you (or that I may continue to have joy in you), and that your joy may be full," or complete.

This joy came from above; it was independent of all earthly circumstances. Christ was in heaven; God had accepted His sacrifice; and God blessed all who believed on Him according to His own estimate of its value, and according to His own delight in His Son.

These causes for joy still exist unchanged. They are as real and as great *now* as on the day of Pentecost, and all believers should thus "rejoice in the Lord always." It is joy in the Lord and from the Lord, and so should ever continue to flow. We look up to Him who having "by Himself purged our sins sat down on the throne of God," and sing, "THOU ART THE SAME." If we would "rejoice in the Lord always," and "in every thing give thanks," we must constantly have to do with *facts*, divine facts; even with facts relating to the incarnation, life, death, and glorification of an infinite Person; we must remember the wonders that He did, the words He uttered, the way God hath dealt with Him, and then we shall be able amidst all sorrows and perplexities to sing, "Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work, I will triumph in the works of thy hands;" yea, higher still our joys may rise, we also may "joy in God through Jesus Christ by whom we have now received the reconciliation."

III. Realizing in some measure this joy we shall be

willing to labour on for God; and the Lord's last words find a field of service for us which will always yield much fruit. "Go ye therefore, and teach (or make disciples) of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.) With these words we should study the same commission as found in the other three evangelists (see Mark xvi. 15-20; Luke xxiv. 46-49; John xx. 21-23); but our space will not allow us to quote and investigate these testimonies.

In the words just quoted we have a commandment *where* to go, and *what* to do.

The field is the world; and we are commanded to go forth and sow the seed, even the word of the kingdom broadcast. Preach the word, seek to gather souls to Christ as His disciples, baptize all such in His name, teach them to do His will, and to observe all that He commanded. Here is work in the world and in the Church, which implies conflict with Satan and all his agents, and requires a single eye to the glory of God.

A blessed proclamation of the Lord's greatness, glory, and grace, accompanies this command. He who laboured on earth, but now lives in heaven, is the omnipotent and omnipresent friend of all loving labourers for souls. Surely they cannot labour in vain, because they shall not labour alone; for HE has said, "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age."

A few precious words are added which contain a precedent for our encouragement, and a pledge of the Lord's faithfulness. "And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them; and confirming the word with signs following." Thus it has been with the true successors of these honoured men in all ages: and thus it shall be with us, if we do the Lord's work honestly, depending on Him for strength and

blessing, ever delighting in Himself as our SAVIOUR, FRIEND, our glorious HEAD, "the Lord of all."

IV. Lastly, these closing words reveal a fulness of truth and sympathy which can never be exhausted.

Let us ponder the wondrous truth of John xx. 30, 31. "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name."

It would seem that when John had written these words, he laid down his pen, and thought his glorious record was finished—that he had said all that the Holy Spirit intended that he should say. Well this would have been a grand finish to his most divine biography, but the glorifier of Jesus thought not so. Either at the same time or at some after period, the gracious Remembrancer brought before the mind of the beloved disciple that most touching scene at the sea of Galilee, in which the transcendent tenderness of Jesus shines forth so brightly, and yet so softly. And having sketched the scene in which sublimity and simplicity are combined, he adds, "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen." (John xxi. 24, 25.)

Now what is the impression which the closing words of these two wondrous chapters of John leaves upon our minds and hearts? is it not as if He had said, "Though I have written so much about the love, tenderness, wisdom, and glory of Jesus, there is much more of the same kind to come; do not think that I have told you all; do not fear but that in the day of the Lord's glory, and in the ages to come, there will be many unwritten wonders concerning the life, death,

and forty resurrection days of the Saviour to be revealed; more of His looks, words, tears, and tenderness to be known and talked over."

Let us then diligently study what has been revealed to us with much gratitude and earnest prayer, and wait for further unfoldings in eternity. Let us bear in mind that the life of Jesus has in it an *identity throughout*, that whether in humiliation, or in exaltation, He is "Jesus Christ, the SAME yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" and that the life of Jesus is the food of all true believers, and if we would live to God, we must be ever feeding upon Him.

Many have speculated about the site of Paradise with its four rivers: in Christ we have our true Paradise, and the four gospels are our four rivers, which will bear us into His heart of grace and home of glory. In His life on earth, and His life in heaven, we find also the true tree of knowledge and the abiding tree of life. May we ever sit down under His shadow with great delight, and find His food sweet to our taste.

EMMANUEL.

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself."
2 COR. v. 19.

WHAT a wondrously blessed thought it is that the One who is in heaven, a glorified man at God's right hand, is the very One whose feet often wearily trod this sin-stained earth of ours; whose hand ministered to its ceaseless necessities, and whose heart was moved with pity and compassion for its countless woes.

Gazing back upon His earthly path, we see it like a streak of light, winding through the darkness of the surrounding scene. Whether it be by the well side at Sychar, or the sea shore at Galilee, or the road going up to Jerusalem, or the home at Bethany, we see the light of divine love and grace and tenderness throwing a halo around every step of the way. "Jesus loved him;"

“Jesus wept;” “Jesus had compassion;”—these are the words we met at every turn of His earthly history. But now He is gone! He is “seated at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens,” from “henceforth expecting until His enemies be made His footstool.”

But is He different *now* to what He was? Is He changed or altered since He left this scene? Is His arm shortened that it cannot save now? Is His ear heavy that it cannot hear? Or has His heart grown careless or indifferent to His people’s woes? Nay; “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” Trace Him from the moment when His feet first touched this earth—in all that wondrous path of grace and tenderness which He pursued down here—till He was lifted up from it and received into glory, and it is God in Christ whom we can track right through—“this same Jesus,” the “Man Christ Jesus,” who is now in glory! It was a human hand of flesh and blood which “touched” the leper and healed him; but it was also the hand of the Omnipotent Creator who had first formed and shaped the sin-marred vessel. They were human tears, falling from human eyes, which He wept over the doomed city of Jerusalem, but their source was the heart of God! It was Emmanuel—“God with us”—“God manifest in the flesh”—who “dwelt among us;” but it is “*this same same Jesus*” all through.

“Behold,” said Stephen, “I see the heavens opened, and the *Son of man* standing on the right hand of God.” “The man Christ Jesus,” now glorified at God’s right hand; but with the same ear, the same heart, the same love—unchanged as in the days of His humiliation—all engaged in His people’s behalf. True, to *sight* and *sense* He cannot *now* be reached; but the eye of faith, steadfastly gazing upward, can still “see Jesus”—our Saviour-God—and approach Him with the same unclouded confidence as did those of old, who “came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him.”

THE PRESENT MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT.

THE church of God was manifestly formed at Pentecost. Believers had been blessed and saved through all the previous dispensations from Adam to Christ; but the eternal purpose of God to incorporate all Christians into "one body," to be a dwelling-place for Himself, was not unfolded until after the descent of the Holy Ghost at the feast of Pentecost.

During the ministry of the Lord Jesus on earth, sinners who believed in Him were saved by His grace and power, and united to Him also by His gift of eternal life. HE had life in Himself and communicated that life to those who had been given to Him by the Father. Those precious words, "I give unto them eternal life," "Thine they were and thou gavest them me," are blessedly familiar to us; they contain a fulness of meaning and richness of grace, yea, boundless unfathomable grace, and evidence indeed that the love of God passeth all understanding. But not till after the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, as "Head," could His members be formed into "one body"—a heavenly body in living union with a heavenly Head.

Such is the church of God—the body of Christ: HE the Head of the body, and every Christian in this dispensation of His grace a member of that blessed body, possessing His life, and chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. Such too is the "temple of God." If we speak of the body, it is a living body; if of the temple, *it* is composed of living stones. "Members" or "stones" alike possess life in Christ, eternally one in and with Him.

After the ascension of Christ, the number of the disciples in Jerusalem being about one hundred and twenty, it is written of them that "when the day of

Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place, and suddenly . . . they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." This descent of the Holy Ghost from heaven was the fulfilment of the repeated promise made to the disciples by their Lord, after His resurrection as well as before His death. Thus the "other Comforter" took possession of the temple composed of living stones, and the church of God in its corporate capacity was formed, indwelt, and manifested to be "God's habitation through the Spirit."

The *unity* which life produced was then seen. Every living member was "baptized by one Spirit into one body." The presence of God was attested by the power of God. Life filled every member. Love flowed from every heart. The word of God's grace and the presence of God's Spirit were realized; living waters suffused dead souls, and on that day about three thousand were added to the church of the living God. In former papers (pp. 35, 76) we have briefly meditated upon the entrance of the Son of God, Christ Jesus our Lord, into this scene of sin and sorrow, and now, after His re-ascension to the right hand of power, we behold the introduction of the church of God into this world. On the morning of the feast of Pentecost there were about one hundred and twenty disciples including the apostles, and during that memorable day their numbers swelled to upwards of three thousand!

The Holy Ghost had come down on a previous occasion. Jesus had been baptized of John in Jordan, and while "praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." God the Holy Ghost thus descended upon and indwelt the Lamb of God—the guileless, harmless Dove abiding upon the gentle, holy Lamb. No rushing mighty wind

from heaven, no extraordinary manifestation of divine power with its overwhelming results, but the Father's voice announces the Son of His love, and the Holy Ghost by His presence attests the same truth; two wonderful and unimpeachable witnesses to the dignity and glory of the illustrious stranger. Thus before the work which the Father gave Him to do was entered upon, He was introduced by the Father and the Holy Ghost to Israel and to the world, as the Son and the servant of God sent here on a special mission of grace and mercy in which all alike were interested and included.

Instantly this faithful messenger submits to the guidance and teaching of that blessed Spirit. We read, He was "full of the Holy Ghost," "and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil." Afterwards He came into a synagogue at Nazareth, and opening the book of the prophet Esaias, read—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted . . . to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." So it will be found from first to last—from the anointing at John's baptism to His cry on the cross—"It is finished"—everything Christ did, every word He said, everywhere He went, He was under the guidance, teaching, and power of the Holy Ghost, as also of the Father who had sent Him. Marvellous mystery—the triune Jehovah in the person of the Son! "For it pleased the Father, that in Him should all fulness dwell." "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

We cannot now dwell on this wondrous fact, but it is specially worthy of attention, that so subject was the eternal Son when in grace He became the servant, that while saying to Philip, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me?" He could add, "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not

of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works." He was the true and faithful servant of the Father and of the Holy Ghost, as truly as He was God's equal, God's fellow from all eternity.

As with the Lord, the Head of the body, so is it with the church, the members of His body. The church *lives* in the Spirit, and should *walk* in the Spirit. Christians must "*worship* in the Spirit," "*pray* with the Spirit," "*sing* with the Spirit," "*be filled* with the Spirit." The Holy Ghost dwells, abides, continues in every believer. As the Holy Spirit of promise, He is given to the Christian for His name's sake, whose we are, and whom we serve, and by His Spirit alone can the infinitely varied work of every member of the body be accomplished.

The Scriptures of truth are the alone standard by which everything is to be tested and judged, and the Spirit of God is the alone power by which truth can be discerned, worship be acceptable, or service rendered.

In reading the Acts of the Apostles, and the various epistles written for our learning, a single and unprejudiced eye will at once see how entirely everything from the beginning to the end was dependant upon and accomplished by the Spirit of God. True, the living members of the body were used according to their varied gifts and grace, but all the *power* was of God—*from* God. Christians were instruments, according to the good pleasure of His will, their hearts were occupied and their tongues used, but all was valueless except "*as the Spirit gave them utterance.*"

As it was in the first hours of the church's corporate existence, so will it be to the last moment of its continuance here. Human eloquence, wisdom and learning, are poor substitutes for the Holy Ghost's ministry. The wise Paul might plant, the eloquent Apollos water, but God alone could give the increase.

The truth is, that as the work of Christ in redemption is a perfect work, most jealously guarded by God,

which must neither be added to nor taken from, so is the work of the Holy Spirit of God. He has come down from heaven to quicken dead souls into life, to dwell in the souls so quickened, to take of the things which are Christ's, to shew them to such, and finally to consummate and perfect His work by quickening our mortal bodies, when our Lord shall come, and we shall be raised incorruptible and be for ever with the Lord. There is never a moment in which the Christian does not need the Spirit's help—no effectual work can be done, no word even is fitly spoken in the church or to the world but by the Spirit's power.

Beloved Christians, let no man deceive you. The church of God is formed of living members only—those who have life in Christ, and are eternally one with Him. Every such member is indwelt by the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. vi. 19), and whether few or many meet together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, they have *His* presence (Matt. xviii. 20); they are the temple of God; the Spirit of God dwelleth in them (1 Cor. iii. 16); they are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (Ephes. ii. 22.) It is a gathering together simply on the ground of having life in Christ. Woe to those who hinder a Christian taking his place among such. Woe to those who invent names, and make distinctions by which Christians are prevented from meeting with Christians to “worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

There were indeed lepers in Israel, but they were commanded to be put outside the camp until the plague of leprosy was healed. There were presumptuous, self-willed sinners who under the judgment of God perished in their sins. These were exceptional cases, and such cases, alas, will now never be wanting in the church of God. “Put away from among yourselves that wicked person,” is God's sentence of ex-cision upon the evil doer, which *must* be obeyed, while

the *rule* must be maintained intact and inviolate—
“Receive ye one another as Christ also received us to the glory of God.” So the apostle enjoins. This also the Holy Ghost manifested as the good pleasure of His will when He first took possession of and formed the church. “All that believed were together.” Surely, surely, we must say, “What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

Again, when these living members come together, whether to worship God in the Spirit, or to edify one another, they can worship and be blessed only so far as God is pleased to use the members severally as He will. He must be the doer of all that is done, or the flesh will be opposing the Spirit, and man be found the antagonist of God! There may be weakness, there will be infirmity, but when God is really and entirely confided in, He will enrich and bless above all we can ask or think.

The church of God!—its value and importance cannot be overstated. It is God’s family—it is Christ’s household; and in these two relationships are involved responsibilities to which our gracious God is most faithful, never forgetting the relationship He has Himself formed, always waiting to communicate His richest blessing even to the weakest and most wayward of His children. Not a child is forgotten, neglected, or disowned. His children indeed lose blessing, oh how much blessing! through unbelief, carelessness, disobedience, and the various forms of evil to which we are so prone; but as it is written, “Jesus having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end;” even so our gracious God and Father in Christ Jesus will never leave, never forsake, until all His children are perfected in glory.

Ah! how sad it is when God has to address His people, and say, “A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if I be a Father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?”

How applicable is this language to God's people now. Many indeed care for their souls, and get saved by God's grace, but who cares for the house of the Lord, the commandments of the Lord, the ordering of His house, the sitting of His servants, the attendance of His ministers and their apparel? Who cares to set things in order, that God may be glorified, the Father honoured, the Master served, His people blessed, and His holy name magnified?

Some efforts indeed have been made to set things in order after a godly sort, but failure has come in as of old; Satan has succeeded in perverting and misapplying these very truths, and many are discouraged if not turned aside by the apparently abortive effort. False assumptions and an unscriptural unity have made sad havoc amongst many whose hearts were stirred within them to seek the more excellent way; bright hopes have been blighted, hearts have been sickened, and not a few led to despair of obtaining anything better than what is unscriptural, and alas, so common.

We need not however, though discouraged, be driven aside or turned back. Oh no, let but our hearts truly feel how God is dishonoured by His people—the children not obeying their Father, the servants not serving their Master—and we shall understand *why* blessing is withheld, and God can “have no pleasure in us.” Let our hearts really contemplate this, and if a spark of affection to Him who so loves us remains, we shall with one heart humble ourselves before the Lord, we shall cease to complain of each other, we shall judge ourselves and endeavour to learn how far *we* are personally responsible for bringing discredit upon the truth, and dishonour upon Christ.

Oh, let us return to the Lord from whom we have grievously revolted, let us confess our sins and evil to Him; He will have mercy upon us, yea our God will abundantly pardon. He who restoreth the soul, will restore and increase the blessing. Let us be determined

to have God's word and God's Spirit only, and we shall increase with the increase of God, we shall edify one another in love, come behind in no good work, and be found waiting for His Son from heaven. The Lord grant it all and more to us, for His holy and blessed name's sake. Amen and Amen.

THE COMPLETION OF THE NAZARITE'S VOW.

NUMBERS vi. 13-21.

THE completion of the Nazarite's vow is full of interest, as pointing onwards to the future joy and recompence of all *present* devotedness to Christ. We have already seen that if we separate ourselves as Nazarites unto the Lord, the object should not so much be special service, but rather heart-consecration to God—a voluntary turning aside from everything to find our portion in Christ Himself.

This separation in our case is not for any limited period, as in the Nazarite of old. It is *for life*, and continues until we reach our home above. Nor would we have it otherwise. Ah, no; the blessedness of fellowship with Christ is so full and satisfying, that the one who enjoys it cares not for the world, and in comparison with **HIM** counts everything else insipid and worthless.

Still, notwithstanding the joy which the Lord gives to those who thus separate themselves unto Him, there is a restraint, a weariness connected with our pilgrimage below; and like the Nazarite, we long for the completion of the days. The difficulties of the way are so great, the danger of defilement so constant, the discouragements so many, the sin within and around us so active, and our shortcomings and falls so frequent, that we look onwards longingly for the rest that remaineth, and oftentimes would fain hasten our "escape from the windy storm and tempest."

We read of the Nazarite that, "when the days of

his separation are fulfilled, he shall be *brought* unto the door of the tabernacle." This is very striking, considering how earnestly he must have desired this hour to arrive. In the day of his failure (see verses 9, 10) he *presented himself* before the Lord, and speedily sought to have his defilement removed, and his head rehallowed; but now, when his vow is fulfilled, he *waits* to be "brought" before the Lord. There is no impatience to throw off the restraints he had imposed upon himself, no eagerness to shew the results of his separation, no hurry to receive the recompence from the Lord, but he quietly waits for *another* to recognize that his vow is fulfilled.

So is it now with the ripe and mellow Christian—the one who still brings forth fruit in old age, and receives an abundant entrance into the kingdom of God. Such an one, like Paul, may know that his race is well nigh run, and his labour in the vineyard completed; but there is no boasting, no glorying in self, no impatience to claim the reward, but with a confident, humble, and grateful spirit, he awaits the long looked for summons to enter into the joy of his Lord.

"And he shall offer his offering unto the Lord" (verse 14), no *small* offering as in the day of his cleansing from defilement (verses 9, 10), but a full complement of sacrifice, presenting Christ in all the varied aspects of His wonderful work. Burnt-offering, sin-offering, peace-offering, meat-offering, and drink-offering are all enumerated.

How truly will these types be fulfilled when *we* are presented before the throne of His glory. We shall not appear before the Lord empty then; our hearts and our hands will be full of Christ—full of Him in all the varied glories of His person and work. Our *present* apprehensions of our Lord Jesus are meagre indeed, but *there* we shall see Him as He is, and our delight in Him will be full and constant.

We know a little of Him as the "sin-offering" now,

and rejoice in the cleansing power of His precious blood; but with what unutterable feelings shall we *then* join in that full chorus of praise, "Thou art worthy, for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood." Yes; we shall still own Jesus as our sin-offering, and never weary of praising HIM as the One "who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

Then follows the "burnt-offering" (verse 16). How little do we know of this now. How feebly do we apprehend that the perfections of Christ are so truly imputed and reckoned to *us*, that we may come before God to receive from His loving hand whatever our spotless Substitute deserves; that HE is *our* burnt-offering, accepted as a sweet savour for *us*, and that all *our* blessings flow down to us as the fruit of God's intense delight and satisfaction in HIM.

Did we realize this, what full unbounded confidence we should have before our God, and with what holy boldness we should come into His presence, and open our mouths wide to receive from Him the good things which He loves to bestow. How often do we lose sight of this precious and glorious truth, and darkness and deadness of soul are the necessary consequence. But when "in the body of His flesh through death," He presents us "holy and unblameable and unprovable in His sight," perfect through His comeliness which He has put upon us, conformed unto His own image, and clothed in His own divine and spotless righteousness, then indeed our souls will joy in HIM as *our* burnt-offering. We shall gaze on HIM as God's perfect and obedient servant, His elect in whom His soul delighteth, and understand in very deed that all *our* joy and glory flows to us as the expression of God's delight in HIM, and as the due recompence of His perfections.

"Then, Lord, shall we fully know,
Not till then, how much we owe."

“And he shall offer the ram for a sacrifice of peace-offerings unto the Lord” (verse 17). Christ has made peace by the sacrifice of Himself. He *is* our peace, and *He* gives peace, and even now we know somewhat of this blessed peace which He has called us to enjoy. If we turn to the law of the “peace-offering” (see Lev. vii. 11–18, 28–34), we find that after the blood and the fat had been presented to God as “the *food* of the offering made by fire unto the Lord” (Lev. iii. 11, 16), the flesh was divided between the priests and the offerer, and *eaten* in token of fellowship with God. So now, we feast *with* God upon the broken body and poured out blood of Christ, and prove in our inmost souls that His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed. But what will it be above? Who can conceive the joy unmingled, full and free, of constant intercourse with Him?

“There we shall see His face,
And never, never sin;
And from the rivers of His grace
Drink endless pleasures in.”

Verily our hearts and our tongues will be full of Christ, and HE will be our one continual peace-offering, on whom we shall feast in fellowship with our God and Father to all eternity.

Then too shall we learn the mystery hidden in the “meat-offering,” under the figure of the basket of unleavened bread—the God-Man, in all His unsullied purity—the fine flour, perfectly even in all His ways—unleavened still, whether baken in the oven or fried in the frying pan. We shall understand Him as *mingled* and *anointed* with oil, full of the Holy Ghost and of power, who emptied Himself and yielded Himself as the obedient One, to be led and guided by the Spirit in all He did and said.

And with what ecstasy shall we pour out the “drink-offering,” the strong wine (Num. xxviii. 7), before our God as we behold JESUS, His well-beloved

Son, His one delight. Surely the courts of heaven will resound with the melodious songs of praise, which will perpetually burst forth from our enraptured hearts.

It is very blessed also to note the prominent place which "the priest" has in this scene. So will it be above. Not only will Jesus our great High Priest be the theme and centre of all our joy, but He Himself, as *the Priest* after the order of Melchisedec, will lead our praises and order our worship, and anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, in the midst of the church, as Head of the church, He, even He, will sing praise to our God and Father.

Then follows the shaving of the Nazarite's head, and the presentation of *his* hair upon the altar as a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. This is very marvellous, but blessedly, gloriously true. This hair was the fruit of separation unto God, and in our case points to the result of communion with God. Every Nazarite brought the same offerings to God, typifying a full Christ in all His manifold perfections; but the length, beauty, and luxuriance of the hair burnt on the altar must have greatly varied in different cases.

Will it not be so with us? Every believer will have a triumphant entry into heaven because of the sacrifice of Christ. Each one will be presented there—"not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing," "holy and without blame before Him in love;" but then follows the judgment-seat of Christ, where we shall individually receive *His* estimate of our walk and ways below.

It is worthy of note that no allusion is *here* made to the Nazarite's failure, though necessarily it must have lessened both the quantity and beauty of his hair; only that which God could delight in and accept, "the hair," is spoken of. Thus will it be when we appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. Our sins and iniquities have been purged with the blood. God has cast them all behind His back, and He promises

that He will remember *them* no more for ever. But all the fruit of His Spirit in us, all our labour in His vineyard which will stand the fire (see 1 Cor. iii. 13, 14), all that we may have suffered or given up for His name's sake, every act of love and faithfulness to Him, will *then* be declared and acknowledged; and not only shall we receive an amazing recompence of reward from His gracious and loving hand, but we shall also learn with rapture and surprise how precious it has been to our God, and how many a thing that we thought little of, and which man despised, ascended up as a sweet savour to Him.

What a stimulus is this truth if we do but grasp it! What a mighty lever to raise one's soul above the things of time and sense, and enable us to walk as seeing Him who is invisible. Who would not wish for an abundant head of hair in that day? Some may possibly argue that they do not want any extra reward—that having been given such a rich and glorious portion, they cannot desire anything more; but should we not long to give joy to HIM, to make HIM glad? And this *is* possible; yea, it is His earnest desire concerning us, as we learn from those marvellous words, "My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine; yea, my reins shall rejoice when thy lips speak right things."

Should we not then strive to yield Him some small return for all the wondrous grace He has bestowed upon us, and covet, yea, earnestly seek, His approving smile, His words of praise? Is not HIS "well done, thou good and faithful servant," more precious than all this world can give? And shall we not arise with increased energy and zeal, and seek to follow Him with true and fervent hearts, intent on doing His will in everything?

We next read that *after* the Nazarite's hair had been accepted upon the altar, he waves the shoulder of the ram before the Lord, and it is given to the priest as his

special portion. How blessedly true this will be of us. Surely, as with wondering and grateful hearts we behold how our Father has prized our obedience and love, we shall joyfully own that Christ was our only strength, and that with "His own right hand and His holy arm" He hath gotten us the victory. With songs of holy triumph shall we wave "*His shoulder*" before our God and Father, and ascribe all the praise and the glory to Him alone. Thus shall we joy before God over Christ, and as the priest fed upon the shoulder of the ram, so will *our Priest* receive the reward of all His labour and toil, and feast on the fruit of His own loving and mighty work within us.

"And after that the Nazarite may drink wine." Yes, we shall drink wine to the full in our own home above, the new wine of the kingdom! No more restraint or watchfulness; no more denial or sacrifice of self; no more contact or conflict with sin. All will be pure; all will be holy; all will be joy unspeakable; and to all eternity we shall bask in the bright sunshine of His love, and drink of the river of His pleasures.

"What will it be to dwell above,
 And with the Lord of glory reign,
 Since the sweet earnest of His love
 So brightens all this dreary plain?
 No heart can think, no tongue can tell,
 What joy 'twill be with Christ to dwell!"

THE NEW COMMANDMENT.

A WORD TO BRING IT TO REMEMBRANCE.

CHILDREN of the heavenly king, beloved, and precious are ye in the sight of Him who is love.

There was a time doubtless in your experience when you questioned the love of God to you, yea to such an extent that you said within yourself, "I cannot think God loves me." When the Holy Spirit opened your

eyes to see yourself in all your sinfulness, you exclaimed, "I am vile; I abhor myself;" and as He turned your eyes to a holy God, in whose sight "the heavens are not clean" (Job xv. 15), your utter uncleanness became more apparent.

You would have crept away in overwhelming shame and confusion of face, and hid your vile self, had it been possible, in some dark, isolated retreat, where the rays of that glorious light could not make manifest the exceeding sinfulness and depravity of a being so loathsome as yourself. Love could not suffer it to be thus. Love had said, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." That same Holy Spirit who convinced of sin was thus preparing you to know by happy experience God's "thoughts of peace"—His purposes of love unchangeable.

Bowed down and convicted, a trembling sinner in the presence of the great I AM, you expected to hear the dreadful but just sentence of condemnation. You *knew* not God; you imagined His holiness could not admit of mercy. But your troubled heart was gently soothed and hushed to rest, when the voice of Love proclaimed in sweetest tones, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

With what joyous delight did your bosom throb as you were absorbed with this heavenly theme of *love*! All other attractions lost their influence. The Holy Spirit was with you; He had lovingly drawn you to the mercy-seat; your soul was filled with adoring praise, as you bowed before HIM who "so loved," and by faith beheld the precious gift of God, Jesus, your adorable Lord and Saviour: you now *knew* Him as the One who took the burden of your sins from off you

and bare them Himself; you saw that your condemnation was passed upon Him, and that His life-blood was shed for *you*; justice was satisfied, God glorified, and you were **SAVED!**

Amazed at the exceeding riches of such love, what could you do? All had been done for you. You could only praise and worship God. "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases!" Happy soul! thus wert thou born of God.

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." We are "begotten of God," and "God is love," therefore our new man is *love* (for Christ is *our life*); let us then seek for grace to obey His word, and from henceforth live a life of love, to the glory of God, for the welfare of His "little flock," and as His witness in the midst of an ungodly world. Do we love the Lord? Is His voice sweet to our ear? Then let us not shrink from His test, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Our Lord would have us live in *love*. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." (John xiii. 34.) Observe the *measure* of the love He seeks from us—it is to be *like* His own, and that is *infinite!* Infinite love dwells *in* us, beloved in the Lord, but alas, how rarely does it shine forth! How is it that such a precious gift is so little known and used? It is because we heed not the Master's commands. We are not obedient to His word. We are continually forgetting that "to obey is better than sacrifice;" content with *knowing*, but not *doing* the word. Thus we lose the happiness which is promised by our blessed Lord. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye *do* them." (John xiii. 17.) "*Blessed* are they that hear the word of God and *keep* it." (Luke xi. 28.)

Beloved, these words are for *us*. We are exhorted to *keep* the word and *do* it, not that we *may* be saved, for we *are* saved, but that we may enjoy the blessings and happiness which accompany obedience; and moreover God is glorified thereby. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples . . . If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love . . . These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." (John xv. 8-12.)

A blessed gift is strong faith; another rich blessing is a good hope; but the greatest of all gifts is love. "And now abideth faith, hope, charity (love), these three; but the greatest of these is charity (love)." "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." (1 John iii. 14.)

Beloved, let us love one another for Christ's sake; "for one is your Master, even Christ; and *all ye are brethren*." Let us not write bitter things against ourselves, by disobedience to the new commandment. What if *others* cannot see as you do? Oh, love them none the less, even if they are cold towards you: "Overcome evil with good." Be sure you are on Scriptural ground yourself; pray much for them; call their attention to the word of God in gentleness and love. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; love is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom. xiii. 10.) "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." (1 John iv. 7, 8.)

Ponder these words. Love to one another is an evidence that we are born of God, and that we know God. The lack of love in so many who profess to be Christians shews that they know *not* God—they obey not the new commandment. The Lord thus addresses

those who obey not His word—"Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

May the Holy Spirit continually bring this truth before us, and enable us to avoid much leanness of soul by giving heed to the word of our Lord.

THE BOW IN THE CLOUD.

GEN. ix. 13.

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days (*at the end of these days*) spoken unto us by *His Son*, whom He hath appointed *heir of all things*, by whom also He made *the ages*."—Heb. i.

It is a precious truth, brethren in the Lord, that all God's thoughts centre in His beloved Son. If we would have communion with our Father, if we would enter into His mind, if we would rejoice with Him, if our hearts would be in harmony with His, it must be in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. God's heart rests in Him, and in Him must be our rest also. It pleased God that in Him should dwell "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." We can know the love of God, the holiness of God, the majesty of God only through Him. He is "the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person." He came to this dark world to manifest the Father, to reveal to us the grace and goodness of the One who has redeemed us to be His own. Surely what all of us, God's beloved children, most need, is more to study Christ, more to "consider Him," and more to sit at His feet, that we may become more like Him.

And as all God's thoughts, so all God's *purposes* converge in "His Son." "He hath appointed Him heir of all things." Man has cast out the heir. On all sides he is robbing Christ of His inheritance, using the things of this world which are Christ's in order to shut out God. It is not merely they who crucified the Lord of Life that said in their hearts, "Come, let us

kill Him, and the inheritance shall be ours." Far more important is it for us to know that this is the deeply-rooted bent and tendency of the heart of every fallen creature, and that it underlies and explains all the energy of the natural man around and within us, that it is the mainspring of all the engrossing cares and engagements and pursuits of the world. The old man in each one of us is saying, "This is the heir; come, let us kill Him," when we are resting on any creature rather than the Creator, when we are using any of our Father's gifts to make us happy without Him, when He Himself is not our satisfying portion, when the appointments of His wisdom and love, whatever they may be, are not received with holy, chastened thankfulness.

"Heir of all things." Yes, this is the purpose and the desire of our God. Man can look with complacency on a sin-polluted world, can try to be content and happy in it. The guilty unpardoned criminal can treat the business and the vanities of the world as the end of life, can amuse himself with its "marriages," its "farms," and its "merchandise," while long-suffering mercy alone withholds the wrath ready to fall upon him. And God's dear children can but too readily make common lot with the world in these things, and join them in their endeavours to embellish and improve and reform that which is all lying under condemnation. Satan is the god of this world. But God patiently bears with it in prospect of the day, which He has fore-ordained, when His righteousness in permitting a day's continuance of such a scene of sin shall be fully vindicated, when the last Adam shall recover that which the first Adam lost, and God, whose holy name has been dishonoured by the first man of the earth, shall be glorified in the Second Man, the Holy, Obedient One, from heaven. "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow of beings in heaven, and beings in earth, and beings under the earth, and every tongue

shall confess that Jesus Christ is LORD to the glory of God the Father."

In moving to carry out this His gracious purpose from the foundation of the world, it has pleased God to work by certain distinct stages and by distinct manifestations of His mind. Not all at once, but here a little and there a little, has He revealed the pre-determined end. It has been "at sundry times and divers manners." God has been gradually effecting the good pleasure of His goodness through a series of *ages* or *dispensations* which are drawing near their close. And these in common with all other arrangements connected with this earth on which we sojourn He made by Christ. They are for Him and by Him; He is the beginning and the end. It is a truth that the material world—the world on which we walk, and which we see with our eyes—was made by Him, for "all things were made by Him," and "the world was made by Him." (John i. 3, 10.) But we are now taught the further truth that "by Him God made *the ages*," that is, fore-ordained those periods of time which together make up the history of the dealings of infinite love with fallen man. By the LORD Jesus were these dispensational times fixed and settled, and with a view to that glory for which HE is now waiting at the right hand of God. All is "according to the purpose or *pre-arrangement of the ages* (for this is the truth taught also in Eph. iii. 11) which God made in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Beloved brethren, are we intelligently taking the happy, blessed place to which we are called as those whom all these revealed purposes and arrangements of our Father most intimately concern? Is it a point of deepest interest to us to know, to be taught—for we have been called to be "friends" and to know these things—the point on the great dial of the dispensations at which we have arrived, the solemn hour of "man's" declining, darkening "day" (see 1 Cor.

iv. 3) which may surely be sounding now on the listening ear of any soul withdrawn from the turmoil of the world and alone with God? Surely the long-delaying doom is about to descend on this Sodom which has despised almost to the full the riches of God's goodness and forbearance. Surely the morning star will soon arise, to be followed by the dawning of the day of God. And surely God is saying now, 'How shall I hide from my waiting, watching, listening children the things that I do?'

As I would be careful not to mislead any into irreverent handling of the things of God, let me say that it is by no exercise of the intellect that we shall be helped here. It is no matter of dates or calculations. Dates had their place while God was dealing with an earthly people, and shall have their place again when the partakers of the heavenly calling shall have been taken up to be with the Lord, and God shall begin to deal with Israel and the nations once more. Meantime that which is of earth, dates, and all else, has been set aside, and in place of unhallowed curiosity and misguided reckonings a holy spirituality of soul is needed before God, that our eyes and our hearts may be opened to receive His estimate, and not the world's estimate or the Church's estimate, of the rapidly developing evil course of all things around us. Thus with eyes anointed with eye-salve from above, in humility and abasement, we may be enabled to discern in the fairest fruits of the world and the Church but a terrible ripeness for judgment, and our estimate will not be shaken, but confirmed, when we find, in accordance with the predictions of the word of truth, a spirit of self-glorying and boasting making light of the abounding evil, and that which is ready to be spued out saying, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing."

Signs such as these may tell us where we are. They abound on all sides. But if the Church, and much

more the world, may be saying that she is rich and has need of nothing, when she is wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, truly the child of God needs wisdom from on high to help him to interpret aright, for the chief evidence that declension and evil are approaching their end may be the general denial of this, and disinclination almost universal to admit it. We are in the "last days," and they are "perilous times"—perilous specially because to increasing evil is added increasing self-delusion and vain confidence. It is now once "*at the end of the ages*" (Heb. ix. 26) that the Lord has appeared, and upon us "the ends of the ages have met." (1 Cor. x.)

Is there then no light to relieve this dark appalling picture? Yes—a flood of heavenly light ever meets the eye that is turned to Christ. In Him all is peace, all is blessing. But to be with Him we must be outside this present evil age. To any who through grace know that the deepest gloom of night is brooding over all that is of earth, there is the sure and blessed consolation that "the night is *far spent*, the day is at hand."

These "ages" or dispensations are all bounding onwards towards the day when they shall be gathered up in Him by whom they were framed and in whom they will meet. He is the one to whom they all point, in whom that which is special to each shall be fulfilled. The "times" which are now concurrently running their course shall soon come to an end in "*the dispensation of the fulness of times*" (the dispensation of the fulfilment of the times), when God will "gather together in one" (*head up* together) "all things in Christ."

To one only of these times we now turn to gather up a little of the light which it casts across the darkness of the night. From the day on which Noah stepped out of the ark commenced one of those "divers manners" of the manifestation of the mind of God to man. Adam

had fallen, and infinite grace had come in to promise recovery. But evil increased until "all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth," and the flood came and swept all away. And then the saved ones, borne in God's ark from the old earth to the new, were blessed by God and received help and encouragement from Him afresh to take the creature's happy place in subjection to the gracious Creator.

The time which then began to run its course has several marked characteristics. As before "the green herb," so now "every moving thing that liveth" was given to be meat for man. And "the fear and the dread" of man was now laid upon all the lower creatures, which once, before he fell, had yielded to him a willing obedience. And now appears the ordinance, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." All these provisions testify to the care and goodness of God, but there are others which may be here more specially considered.

Firstly, "The Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth: neither will I any more smite every thing living as I have done." Here then commenced the time of "the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and long-suffering" (Rom. ii.), which from that day to this have marked God's ways towards the sinner. We are in this "time" still. It will continue till "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God"—until God, who now beseeches sinners to be reconciled, shall send strong delusion (an energy of error) that men may believe Satan's lie—till men shall call on the mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them "from the wrath of the Lamb," who now as their loving Saviour offers them life and peace through His precious blood. Meanwhile "the goodness of God leadeth" all "to repentance." This is the desire of God's heart now. And because God will not

again curse the ground, or smite every thing living for man's sake, a world still remains unjudged which has probably advanced in guilt and responsibility as much beyond that world on which the flood burst as it has advanced beyond it along the downward stream of years. God now bears with anything. No extreme of godlessness, hypocrisy, impiety, or depravity will cause God to hasten by a day the pre-appointed time of wrath. *Now* man may despise, and mock, and blaspheme, and lift himself up against God in a way that would have shocked the guilty world before the flood. Still God is only "long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter iii.) This is God's way with sinful man *now*. Who can say how long it will be so? And what will be the righteous doom of those who despise a love and long-suffering which are inconceivable?

Secondly, the Lord said, "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." (Gen. viii. 22.) How little it is remembered that we owe the continuing alternations of the seasons, the recurring hours of light and darkness, and all their attendant blessings, to the spontaneous resolve of the gracious God! This is His record of a predetermined forbearance, which even the maturing evil of "these last days" avails not to weary out; a forbearance now abused by impenitent man, to the emboldening of himself in sin and carelessness, while his inmost heart's thought is, "Where is the promise of His coming?" "All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Yet God *has* "not left Himself without witness," in that He does good, and gives us *rain from heaven* and *fruitful seasons*, filling our hearts with joy and gladness. (Acts xiv. 17.) And now His way, which we as His dear children are called to imitate, is to make "His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and send rain on the just and on the unjust."

Thirdly, there is the gracious promise—and it applies to all this long dark course of years, from Noah's day until there shall be a new earth, the present earth and heavens having passed away—"I do set *my bow in the cloud*, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass *when I bring a cloud over the earth* that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, and I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh." In the place of the "mist that went up from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground," when "the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth" (Gen. ii. 5, 6), there were now *clouds*, and Noah and his sons had now learned what a cloud at the mandate of God could bring about. Doubtless the solemn lesson was soon forgotten; for man forgets everything that is of God; but for many a day after Noah left the ark the sight of a gathering cloud must have filled men's hearts with awe. And God thus intervenes in love, and "*makes a covenant*" with all flesh, and sets His bow in the cloud—a token to Himself and to us, little as we esteem it, that the "long-suffering of God, which waited in the days of Noah," waits longer now, and will never bring a flood to destroy this earth for evil man's sake again.

We forget, but God does not forget. We, dear children of God, are too apt, with the world which knows not God, to be satisfied with the "scoffer's" argument, that as all things continue as they were, seedtime and harvest, day and night, so they will continue. We forget that our only ground for confidence, when a cloud no bigger than a man's hand comes above the horizon, that it is not the herald of another deluge about to sweep man, so meet for destruction, from the earth, is that we have God's word and God's covenant that He will not thus execute righteous judgment on this world again. How ought every passing cloud in

the sky and every bow in the cloud to cast each dear child of God consciously upon his Father's love, which alone can be his resting-place for to-day as well as for eternity, and which alone can give him peace.

We forget indeed, but God forgets not. The bow in the cloud has become what man calls a natural phenomenon: it is the result of natural causes to us. To God it is still, and will be down to the end, the remembrancer of His word, of His faithfulness, of His goodness, and of His love. Three times again it comes to view in "*the word of truth*," and it ever appears in order to stay in measure and with mercy the hand which justice and righteousness would urge on to overwhelming judgment.

The first of these passages is in Ezekiel i., where, when a portion of God's people were already in captivity, and the remainder were about to follow, when the glory of God was departing from Jerusalem, when a long dark night of calamity was about to be decreed and declared against rebellious Israel, the chastened prophet sees "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord" (v. 28); and "as the appearance of *the bow* that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about it." God would not unfold the judgments about to fall on the people whom He still loved without first manifesting Himself as the One who in the midst of wrath remembers mercy. In the roll put into Ezekiel's hand "there was written lamentations and mourning and woe;" and "fury" was to be poured out and "anger" accomplished on Israel "for all her abominations;" yet a remnant should be left (chap. vi. 8), and they should be gathered again out of the countries in which they were scattered (chap. xx. 34), and the "one Shepherd," God's righteous servant, the true "David," should yet feed them, and "the Lord would be their God." (chap. xxx. 23, 24.)

And a darker day than that of Israel's dispersion is

yet to come. "A day of *clouds*" above all other days shall this be. The rejected Son of God shall then come *with clouds* to judge and to make war. And such a day shall this earth then see "as was not since the beginning of the world, no nor ever shall be." "A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness." "For the day of the Lord is great, and very terrible, and who can abide it?" But in these, earth's extremest throes, mercy is remembered still. Again, when that day of terror begins, there is seen "a *rainbow* round about the throne" of Him who is about to avenge God's outraged holiness and to cleanse the earth (Rev. iv. 3), and as the darkness deepens there stands out (chap. x. 1) a mighty angel, a minister of the wrath of God, "clothed with a *cloud*, and a *rainbow* upon his head." Some shall "escape all these things which shall come to pass, and stand before the Son of Man" (Luke xxi. 36); some the Lord "will keep from the hour of trial which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth;" the bride shall be caught up to be for ever with her Lord. Of some it shall be said, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord *from henceforth*," and for the elect Israelites' sake "those days shall be shortened," and so, though Jerusalem shall be delivered up to her enemies, and spirits of devils working miracles shall gather the kings of the earth and of the whole world to make war against the Lord Himself in the battle of that great day of God Almighty (Rev. xvi. 14, xix. 19), all flesh shall not be destroyed. The covenant with Noah will not be forgotten: in earth's blackest clouds the bow beams brightly still. And when the cloud clears away (for God has ordained that all clouds shall pass), there will be "a morning without clouds;" this groaning creation shall bow before its rightful King, "ruling in the fear of God," and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

“I do bring a cloud over the earth.” Do not clouds come now over every dear child of God? And is it not our Father who brings them? They are a part, a chief part, of the needed discipline. Not clouds of unbelief and sin, nothing to prevent us from walking in the light of our Father’s countenance, nothing to shut Him out from our unveiled face, but the cloud of trial and chastening, heavy with the raindrops of blessing, that we, although we are sons—yea, because we are sons—may learn obedience by the things which we suffer and may be partakers of His holiness. Shall we be dismayed at these? In each darkest hour it is our blessedness to look for the bow ever visible to the eye of faith. God will “REMEMBER,” and the waters will not overwhelm.

The bow tells the whole family of man that “*while the earth remaineth* seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” But earth-times will have an end, though there are yet “ages to come.” (Eph. ii. 7.) Though a flood shall not again destroy, another agent is ready to do God’s work, as ready though as little made account of by man, as were the undreaded fountains of the great deep before the day that Nóah entered into the ark. “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which (that is, at the close of which) the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat: the earth also and *the works that are therein* shall be burned up.” (2 Pet. iii. 10.) Such is the end of all that man most values.

“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?”

“Wherefore, beloved, seeing that we look for such things, let us be *diligent* that we may be found of Him *in peace*, without spot and blameless.”

GOD'S JOY IN HIS FAMILY.

God's object in our redemption is not merely that He might deliver us from hell, and take us to heaven. Great and glorious as this object is, and calling as it does for our adoring and eternal praise and gratitude, yet it falls infinitely short of the blessed purpose of our gracious God.

He desires to gratify the deep and overflowing affections of His own heart, by surrounding Himself with a *family* on whom He can lavish the fulness of His grace and love; a family in whom He can delight Himself, and make them as happy as He Himself is happy; a family who will reciprocate His love, whose every heart will beat in unison with His, and in the midst of whom He may regale Himself with the pleasant fruits of love and gratitude and praise which He Himself has sown and cultured in them.

This deep and earnest longing of our God will be fully met in the home He is preparing for us in His courts above. All His children will *then* be conformed to the image of His Son. Each one will then shine forth resplendent in His likeness, all glorious within and without. Each one will respond to every desire of His heart, and gratify and glorify Him in every way; and collectively they will form a family worthy of Him, made worthy through the worthiness of the Lamb.

What parent does not know the joy of seeing his children delighting in his love? This is the joy our Father seeks from us. What father does not desire to have his whole family happy and contented, each one filling and satisfied with his proper place and service, and all loving and caring for one another? This is our Father's desire respecting us; not only His future purpose, but His present desire; and a desire so deep and precious to Him, that He has made most wonderful

provision for its present fulfilment. And shall *we* be careless and indifferent respecting it? Is it right that He should have no *present* answer to His love? no *present* delight in His family? Shall we be satisfied to postpone the joy of thus rejoicing our God until the future? Shall we neglect the *present* opportunity of gathering around Him, that He may delight Himself in us, and minister increased blessing to us?

He has redeemed us to Himself, and He seeks—yea, covets our love! Wonderful indeed that it should be so; yet is it blessedly true that He *values* our affection, and delights to have us near Him. He loves to hear our voice, and He rejoices over and treasures up any truthfulness of heart or real devotedness to Him. “The Lord’s portion is His people.” The saints are His inheritance; aye more, they are “the riches of the glory of His inheritance.” Not only has He saved us with an everlasting salvation, but He has crowned us with loving-kindnesses and tender mercies, and made every possible and needed provision for our *present* as well as future joy and blessing.

The deep desire of our gracious God to dwell among and delight Himself in His people was very early manifested in His dealings with man. When He created Adam and Eve in innocence, and placed them in the garden of Eden, He was accustomed to come down and walk and talk with them in the cool of the day; and when sin came in and marred this holy, happy intercourse, He did not rest until He had again restored them to His favour and presence. True they had to suffer for their sin, and terrible have been the fruits of their disobedience; yet His grace abounded and devised a way in which His banished ones might be redeemed and brought nigh. His Son, His well-beloved and only Son, was sacrificed in their stead; and pardon, life, and glory flowed to them through Him, and raised them up again to fellowship with God.

The same truth is unfolded in the history of the

children of Israel. Redeemed out of Egypt by the blood of the lamb, and fairly brought unto Himself in the wilderness, we hear God say, "Let them make ME a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." True He had redeemed them; but how could holiness dwell with unholiness, light with darkness, perfection and purity in the midst of evil and pollution? The Lamb, the slain Lamb, is the blessed and perfect answer.

If we turn to Exodus xxix. 38-46, we find that when the sanctuary was formed, where God in His wonderful grace promised to dwell, the priests were commanded to offer two lambs upon the altar day by day continually, one in the morning and one in the evening. Thus morning by morning, as the sun arose, the sweet savour of the offered lamb ascended up to God, presenting Christ and His perfections, and pointing onwards to the precious sacrifice which He would make as the full atonement for Israel's sin. Again at even, as the sun went down, the bright flame of the evening-offering shone forth through the darkness, and spoke again to God and Israel of the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.

Thus Israel were never seen by God apart from the lamb. They were always under the shelter of its blood, and accepted in its perfections. These lambs were not offered for the priesthood only, but for the whole of Israel. The fire on the altar was never suffered to go out, and day and night the flaming fire or smouldering embers of the burnt-offering, perpetually presenting Christ, and ascending up as a sacrifice well-pleasing to God, brought down one continual stream of blessing from His gracious hand.

These lambs were the provision of His grace, that *He might dwell among them*; as He says, "This shall be a continual burnt-offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee. And there I will meet with the children of

Israel, and Israel [margin] shall be sanctified by my glory . . . And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God." Again and again He reiterates the same words—"that I may dwell among them" (see verses 45, 46), proving how deep and abiding was this desire respecting them.

Our God is the same; He changes not; and this is His *present* desire concerning us who are His children. He has given us JESUS, His well-beloved Son, as the sacrifice for our sin. His blood cleanseth from all sin, and makes us meet for fellowship with God. He has also given us JESUS as our perpetual burnt-offering; and not only have we redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, but we are also complete in Him, arrayed with His perfections, and accepted in the Beloved.

Thus our God and Father can meet with us, and speak to us, and delight with us in all that Jesus is and does. As Israel formed the sanctuary for God according to His own appointment where He might come and dwell among them, so now the new-born members of the family of God are builded together an habitation of God through the Spirit; and when two or three, or two or three hundred or thousand of these living members gather together in the name of Jesus they form a *tabernacle for God*, where He delights to come and meet with them and reveal to them more and more of the riches of His grace and glory.

Not only does He dwell by His Spirit in every individual believer, as He says, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" (1 Cor. vi. 19), but He also dwells in the church *collectively* whenever believers are gathered together unto Christ. The Lord Jesus has promised to be in the midst of even the two or three gathered together in His name, and He must be ever faithful to His promise, and ready to manifest HIMSELF and to delight Himself in us.

Oh, if our hearts were more alive to this truth, how

different would our meetings be! What unction and power, what holy fear and reverence, would characterize them! what patient waiting upon God! what lowly sitting at His feet! Did we see Jesus *personally* in our midst, how humbly we should wait for His direction in all things! Each eye would be fixed on Him, each ear attent to hear what He would say, and in very deed we should look to Him to order and lead our worship. Prayer then would indeed be in the spirit, and not the mere utterance of words; and no one would venture to minister the truth unless he were very sure that He had bidden and empowered him so to do.

And is He less present because we do not see Him? Often indeed His voice is not heard because of our fleshly impatience. We do not realize His presence, and therefore do not wait on Him, but attempt to do in our own wisdom and strength that which He in His grace is waiting for—the opportunity of doing for us. We forget that we have to walk by faith and not by sight, and therefore fail to depend on the *unseen* but surely present Lord. Good intentions and knowledge of the truth are allowed to usurp His place, and the Spirit's manifested presence and power are greatly hindered. Though professedly waiting on the Lord, how often prayers are prayed, and hymns are sung, chapters read, and the truth ministered, and yet all is comparatively cold and lifeless. And why? Simply because the Lord's presence is not realized, and therefore HE is not waited on to order our worship and supply our need.

“*There I will meet with you.*” Did we but remember this, how different it would be! When we come together it should be to *meet God*—not merely to meet with one another and refresh each other, but to *meet God*. He desires to meet with us. He loves to have the members of His family gathered together that He may joy in their love, and have the opportunity of enriching them still more abundantly out of His own exceeding fulness.

Shall we refuse to give Him this joy? Oh, rather shall we not cluster around Him, and with humbled, chastened spirits seek to listen to His voice, and give Him the opportunity of blessing us as He delights to do?

THE KING'S FEASTS.

"The father said to his servants . . . Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry."—LUKE xv.

WELL doth the Scripture say, "The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." He hath shewn us in words and by deeds what the Father is. "God hath spoken unto us by His Son." And the Son hath manifested the Father, "full of grace and truth."

In this touching story we see the Father's love for the lost son. It is the getting the son back again that gives opportunity for the expression of the love already there. As soon as He saw him He "had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." And then, giving expression to His long repressed love, commands the servants to bring forth His *best* robe and put it on, to put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, to kill the fatted calf, that they might all feast in joy together because the lost one was found.

How God *delighteth* in mercy! for "God is love," and love cannot contain itself; it seeks for objects on which to bestow itself. More blessed ever the giver than the receiver; for though blessed are the *loved*, yet more blessed is *he* that loves.

The Lord speaking out His thoughts in John iv. regarding His joy in saving the woman, says, He had "meat to eat they knew not of." And so here the joy of the feast consists in the presence of the object of the Father's love, and in the joy of the Father over him, in which He calls all to share. This is a feast of God's providing, expressive of His joy and delight.

Men make a feast to get pleasure—to gratify themselves. God makes a feast because He is gratified and wishes others to share His joy.

God thus reveals what most delights Him. He tells us He is glad when a lost one returns, when a sinner repenteth. What holy joy! What pure delight! God is glad in the good of His creatures, and so when a ruined one seeks back to Him, from whom all good comes, His joy is shewn forth thus—“Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.” He calls on all around Him to share His joy—to feast with Him.

Beloved, may we enter more into the joy of the Lord in the salvation of sinners, and sing for joy over rescued souls!

“And the Lord appeared unto Abraham in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; and he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, and said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts: after that ye shall pass on: for *therefore are ye come to your servant*. And they said, So do, as thou hast said. And Abraham hastened . . . and he took butter and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat . . . And the Lord said, shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?”—GENESIS xviii.

HERE we have revealed unto us that the Lord taketh delight in them that fear Him. Abraham was called “the friend of God.” The Lord could “commune” with him; for “the Lord’s portion is His people.”

Abraham prepares Him a feast. He takes of the best he has, “a calf tender and good,” and spreads the table for his heavenly visitors under the tree, standing by as they eat. What honour vouchsafed to him to entertain such guests. Yet Abraham knew in some measure the mind of his visitors, for “*therefore are ye come*,” said he.

“If a man love me . . . My Father will love him, and *we* will come unto him, and make our abode with

him." Beloved, thus speaks the Son who knoweth the Father. Can we not *now* understand the joy of God in receiving a welcome from His people? We love to greet those we love and to show them all hospitality. God *loves* to come and sensibly manifest Himself unto us. Shall we be slow to entertain Him?

Beloved, do we not often miss such an honour by failing (through want of communion) to recognise "strangers" in the course of our everyday life, by being so self-occupied that we miss the opportune moments in which He presents Himself, and they pass on unnoticed?

See Abraham's reward. He gets more than a promise to himself. The Lord goes on further to open out His mind to him as to what He purposes, and Abraham thus gets the blessed office of intercessor. What a rich reward! Who can tell the blessing that accrueeth to him who feasts such a guest! "I will come in unto him, and sup with him, *and he with me.*"

Beloved, knowing the joy our Lord takes in being thus entertained, and the rich rewards following, shall we not seek to show "hospitality" in this respect, that so when our Lord visits us "in the heat of the day," during our pilgrimage here, we may give Him of our best, and be thus ready to receive fresh understanding of His mind and will?

THE TRUMPETS OF SILVER.

NUMBERS X.

THESE trumpets were to be blown by "the priests, the sons of Aaron;" therefore, we who know the power of that blood which has "washed us from our sins, and hath made us kings *and priests* unto God," may find much comfort and encouragement from this passage, as being those who, in spirit, are alone able or entitled to use them.

The occasions *when* these silver trumpets were to be used, give most interesting instruction and exhortation to the Lord's people. In Israel's case they were to be used for "the calling of the assembly;" for "the journeying of the camps" while in the wilderness; and also in time of war after their entry into the land.

Let us specially consider the latter occasion, concerning which God says, "If ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye *shall be* remembered before the Lord your God, and ye *shall be* saved from your enemies."

How should these words comfort the weak, trembling heart of the believer, who, though he has entered into rest—the land—in the Lord Jesus (see Heb. iv. 3), still suffers from the constant attacks of the great enemy of souls, and is often cast down by sin, sorrow, and trial, and harassed and crushed by a sense of evil within and around. How should it strengthen and cheer his heart thus to hear God saying, "Ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye *shall be* remembered, and ye *shall be* saved."

It is most interesting to notice that, wherever the priests of old thus obeyed God's word, whether in the wilderness or in the land, their faith was immediately answered; and God makes special reference to it, as if He would teach us how His "ear is ever attent," and His hand ready to save His trusting, His obedient people. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." (Rom. xv. 4.)

In the war against the Midianites (Numbers xxxi.) distinct mention is made of Phinehas the priest, "with the trumpets to blow in his hand," as if the twelve thousand armed men were to be reminded that strength and victory are only of God, and also of His promised help when thus sought.

When Israel compassed the walls of Jericho, the "trumpets" (in this case made of rams' horns) were the only weapons used to cause the walls to fall. The harsh din of the rams' horns may have seemed a poor sound in the ears of the people of Israel; but thus they were reminded that they were *nothing*, and could *do nothing*, that God might be *all in all*.

The next mention of blowing the trumpets is in the story of Gideon; and here it was not the priests, but each warrior in the little chosen army of picked men who blew the trumpets; and when they did so, the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, and the host of Midian fled. (Judges vii. 22.)

Never did God turn a deaf ear to the cry of His people. In the time of the Judges every thing was entirely out of course (see Judges xxi. 25); the priests neglected their duties and privileges, but God answered the faith that could look to Him through every failure; and those three hundred devoted men of Gideon's army, whose trust in God took from them all fear (Judges vii. 3-7)—with a single eye and true heart-consecration to God, thus took the service of God's priests, were answered according to their faith, and were "saved from their enemies."

In 2 Chron. xiii. we again hear of the trumpets. Abijah boasts that God Himself is Judah's captain, and that they had His priests with sounding trumpets; and when beset in the battle before and behind, "they cried unto the Lord, and the priests sounded with the trumpets," and "God delivered" their enemies into their hands.

This blowing an alarm with the trumpets does not convey the idea of a cry of fear, since the same expression is used for the calling the camp to take their journeyings in the wilderness; it rather seems to betoken the trusting appeal—the *boastful confidence* that *reckons* on God's help, and that owns His strength as the only weapon against the enemy. Would that we

knew more what it is to have "the joy of the Lord as our strength," and "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might," to blow the trumpet, and we too should find that we are indeed "remembered before the Lord, and saved from our enemies." We do not delight half enough in this service of praise—this boastful triumph in our God. And how little do we know of joying in tribulation, that Christ's power may rest upon us. (2 Cor. xii. 9.)

May we not read Rom. v. 1-11 in connection with these thoughts upon Numbers x. ? In verses 2, 3, and 11, we have different renderings given of the same Greek word, which denotes a boastful joy or glorying. Does not this answer to the trumpet of praise ?

The Israelites in the wilderness were redeemed out of Egypt; they stood "in grace;" but before they commenced their march, the priests were to blow the trumpets. Thus did they "rejoice in hope of the glory" (Romans v. 2) as they looked forward to the land. "Not only so;" they were thus taught "to glory in tribulation also" (Rom. v. 3); to rejoice in each encounter with the enemy in each time of difficulty and trial, because then they learnt God's mighty power, and felt His tender love "shed abroad" in their hearts.

So *we* now learn through tribulation the power of Him who is "the captain of our salvation," and in some measure say with Paul, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." (2 Cor. xii. 10.)

If the confident appeal—the sounding of praise—was commanded before encountering dangers, how much more would the priests delight to blow the trumpets on the days of gladness—the solemn days, and the beginning of the months—over the burnt-offerings, and over the sacrifices of peace-offerings, "for a memorial" before their God? (Num. x. 10.) The shout of praise,

the triumphant rejoicing, *because* they were the Lord's, because Jehovah was their God, was ever a sweet memorial to Him of His love for them, how He had redeemed His people, and brought them unto Himself. (Exodus xix. 4.) When God's order was fully carried out, priests were specially appointed for this service. (See 1 Chron. xv. 24, and Nehemiah xii. 35-41.)

We too should delight "to blow the trumpets" over the burnt-offerings and the sacrifice of peace-offerings, praising Him who says, "He that offereth praise glorifieth me." Thus should we "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." (Rom. v. 11.) Should not our hearts make their "boast in God," and sound the trumpet of thanksgiving over that great sacrifice, that atonement which gives us reconciliation and life, learning, moreover, that glorious truth, "Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life?"

Having received "abundance of grace," we are called to praise and glorify Him, by whom also we "shall reign in life;" and as we dwell on Christ's finished work—the *perfectness* of His sacrifice, (for we read, "by one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified,") we may join in anticipation in that burst of praise which will ever ascend in the Canaan above, at the sight of Him,—“the Lamb as it had been slain”—“Thou art worthy; . . . for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood; . . . and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

Sin is a poison	...	Christ the antidote.
Sin is death	...	Christ is life.
Sin is sickness	...	Christ is health.
Sin is darkness	...	Christ is light.
Sin is hell	...	Christ is heaven.
Sin is folly	...	Christ is wisdom.
Sin <i>was</i> mine	...	Christ <i>is</i> mine.

FIGHTING AND BUILDING.

"THEY which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon."—NEHEMIAH iv. 17.

WHAT a picture of keen alertness is conveyed in this passage. We seem to see the builders intent upon their work, yet with weapons so close at hand, so ready to be snatched up and used on the instant, that every diligent labourer, no matter what his station might be, from Nehemiah himself to the humblest burden-bearer, was an embodied resistance to evil, no less than a promoter of good. Building and fighting; fighting and building; nay, if need were, even building and fighting together, while Sanballat and his companions struggled and schemed with desperate pertinacity by force or fraud to frustrate their aims.

Is it not a striking illustration of the position and duties of God's children at the present day, especially of those who are labouring directly for Him, in whatever way or sphere it may be? Day by day, hour by hour, they come in contact with the enemy, and prove the truth that those who build must be prepared to fight also, and that by God's grace as steadily and perseveringly against the Sanballats and Tobiahs of our time as Nehemiah and his party did against those of old. Shall we look at the matter a little in this light, and note a few of the characteristics of the foes with whom we have to contend?

We do not need to go far to find the counterpart of the bitter, scornful Horonite. "What is this thing that ye do? Will ye rebel against the king?" And then with a slight change of note: "What do these feeble Jews? Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish that are burned?"

Do we not seem to hear the spirit of the present

age speaking through the lips of Sanballat? The ignoring rather than the distinct denial of all divine claims; the slighting tone, the assumption of superiority, centering in the insulting epithet "feeble!" They to whom the cross of Christ is very foolishness, in whose eye man's reason is all in all, are terribly many. Turn where we may we meet them; the literature of the day is to a great extent at their command; the great majority of those who aspire to a name and place in the world are more or less tinctured with the prevailing philosophic ideas, and from every side, in ever-varying phrase it may be, but with never-varying meaning, comes the accusation or insinuation of feebleness "against" Christianity. To avow fealty to Christ is to avow weakness of intellect, dwarfishness of mind, backwardness as to progress, while all the giants rank themselves on the opposite side.

Meanwhile the direct attack is carried on in a multitude of ways, by open assault against the bulwarks of our faith, by the secret undermining of its foundations, by scorn and obloquy, by contemptuous pity, by wily expostulations, by the thousand devices which Satan can invent and bring to bear against the followers of the Lord. Let us then, on our side, with one accord make our prayer unto God, set a watch, and each one do his part simply and fervently, leaving results in the good hand of our God.

Let us remember one truth, humbling or comforting according to the spirit of him who receives it, that our Master assigns to every one of His people his own special work, and that while each one may be happily certain of blessing in the performance of his allotted task, no one can expect nor will he receive it if he wilfully enter into labour which does not belong to him. And yet another, very practical in its bearings: our warfare is not at our own charges; all our supplies must come from above, whether we are called on to act or to endure, to speak or to be silent, to bring the

sanctified powers of intellect to bear on the foe on his own ground, or to give that most convincing of all testimonies to the truth as it is in Jesus, the living out of a Christian life in the might of overcoming faith—faith which our Lord Himself has said can remove mountains, and which, thanks be to God, may find a place alike in the heart of the learned or the unlearned, the foremost and the least conspicuous of the Church of Christ. Geshem's reports may be hard to bear, the temptations to profitless conference with the enemy may be many and plausible, but, like Nehemiah, let us stand firmly in our places, that our hands be not weakened nor the work left undone.

The Tobiahs, who are they? "Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." Do we not meet with such speakers everywhere, not so much openly opposing the labour of evangelization as detracting from its value; watching revivals, not to rejoice over and help in the work, but to note the failures; chilling the zeal and depressing the courage of the young and inexperienced, who are making their first essay amongst the poor and suffering, by ironical questionings and half-amused wholly unkind prophecies as to the non-stability of the result; ever on the alert as to the lack of success of missionary enterprise, whether at home or abroad; quick in seeing, unsparing in condemning, untiring in publishing the faults and inconsistencies of every Christian within range of their vision.

Oh, these Tobiahs,—what grace we need to cope with them and their evil influences with meekness and yet with unflinching firmness! How they hinder us in our work; how persevering and ingenious they are in their cruel pastime, for such it often is; and worse still, how often we have bitterly to feel that there are those amongst us allied in temper with them, who, from constant association, family ties, thoughtlessness, love of ease, dread of singularity, or some such cause,

are ready to echo their words and bring their blighting spirit straight into the very stronghold of the faith.

“Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them. For there were many in Judah sworn unto him, because he was the son-in-law of Shechaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah. Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.” What a suggestive passage this is! Who shall tell all the evil wrought amongst us, the weakening of the hands of God’s people, the enfeebling of their knees, the calling of evil good and of good evil, the uncertain, halting walk, the dimming of the light before men, which has resulted from these alliances—which is in fact their natural, almost inevitable sequence?

The opponents of whom we have hitherto spoken are chiefly outside our borders, they are on the other side of the wall, open in their enmity to us and our work, however crafty in their mode of carrying on the warfare. But the Shemaiahs, who and where are they? Shall we not find them in our own hearts, which are so full of deceit; so ready to be hired by our foes; so terribly apt at couching their evil suggestions in the language of the sanctuary, and thus adding danger to danger? now listening to Sanballat, and loosening hold on the sure oracles of God,—questioning, debating, seeking to dive into mysteries which faith can grasp, but into which sight can never gain entrance; now, at the hint of Tobiah, weighing work against result, and crying out “profitless;” now catching sight of every danger and magnifying it a hundredfold; now setting one duty in opposition to another; now softening compromise and cowardice into common prudence and self-defence, and urging us to withdraw our bands and retreat while there is time, lest the enemy should slay

us utterly. Satan, without the wall, like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Satan, within the wall, transformed into an angel of light.

Thus we have counted up some, at least, of the foes with whom we have to contend. As they have passed in review before us, has not the exhortation in Eph. vi. 10-18 grown in force and significance? Let us dwell on it long and prayerfully.

“My brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”

Let us take these words home and act upon them in that strength which our gracious Master will freely give to all who ask for it. “Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, He it is that doth go with thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”

One word in conclusion. “And he that sounded the trumpet was by me. And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another. In what place therefore ye hear

the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither to us: our God shall fight for us."

"If one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken." Let us all be quick to hear the trumpet, and prompt in responding to it, no matter whence the appeal may come. We have each our station at the wall; but we are all together fighting the Lord's battle—all together striving according to our poor measures to do the Lord's work.

Brethren, let sectional distinctions, personal jealousies, never keep us apart. Who can over-estimate the value of a warm grasp from the hand of Christian fellowship, of a word of earnest exhortation, of loving caution, of kindly encouragement,—nay, even of a look of brotherly interest? We have all our times of weakness, of doubt, and depression; we need each one of us the help, the cheer, the holy companionship one of another. The foe is compact and united in purpose. Let us be compact, too, one in heart, as we are surely one in hope and aim; and let us be one, too, in taking for our watchword, amid all the difficulties and besetments of our work and warfare, that glorious truth which belongs to us as believers—
 "I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHICH STRENGTHENETH ME."

LETTER AND SPIRIT.

WE know the contrast drawn between the letter and the Spirit by the apostle Paul in 2 Cor. iii. The one we are told kills, and the other quickens. The one like the law to Israel meets man from without, and the other like the Gospel of the grace of God meets man from within, and by giving a new life bestows the power that makes the new covenant, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," an instinct of the new creation; and thus the yoke of God becomes light and the burden easy.

Let us dwell a little upon the relation that the believer in Christ holds to the letter and to the Spirit, as practically marking his life and his ways. In the purpose of God, we know that the body is dead because of sin, and the Spirit is life because of righteousness. We can read our title to heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and can say joyfully, that we are quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit down in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

All this is true, eternally true in regard to our standing in Christ, and our completeness in Him. God's work in Christ Jesus for us is a perfect imputation to us of all that He is. The substitution is complete; for He was made sin, and we are made the righteousness of God in Him. But imputation does not end God's work in us as His workmanship in Christ. That which has become ours by imputation, has to become ours by impartation. This is effected in embryo in regeneration, when the new nature is given, and by the operation of the Holy Ghost is being gradually developed into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. As in the reception of Christ, faith is essential to lay hold on the value of His death for justification, so is faith necessary moment by moment to enable us to realize what Christ is for sustaining and promoting the growth of the new life.

The solemn question for each heart is this: How far is the truth of God to ourselves *spirit*? How far is it only *letter*? We cannot say that practically all the truth we know is held in spirit; and perhaps it may be the sad conviction of the heart, that very much which is most fully held is held only in the letter. When held in spirit, the truth holds its possessors in its mighty grasp. It is not *we* who hold the truth then, but the truth that holds us; and it thus becomes a mighty sanctifying power to him that possesses it.

The contrast between man's idols and the living God is true between truth held in the letter, and truth

held in the spirit. Of the one Isaiah says, "They are a burden to the weary beast:" and of *Himself* the Holy One writes, "Even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made and I will bear; even I will carry and I will deliver." Alas, that we have to carry so much of our truth, and to be weary under its heavy load, rather than that we should be upheld by the truth, sanctified by it, carried by it, and delivered by it.

Truth in Christ is life, and where there is life there is power. To this our Lord referred when He said to those Jews who believed on Him, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples truly; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free:" free from sin, for "whoso committeth sin is the servant of sin:" free from the devil, for "that wicked one toucheth him not:" "free from the law of sin and death," as having "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." This is the liberty of faith, and to some it may seem an impossible liberty; but faith owns no impossibility, but rather lays hold of Paul's experience—"I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

Alas! do we not tread the land of the promises of our God as if we trod an alien soil, as if the Canaanite still reigned, as if an Edomite were king? What is this but a tacit confession that truth, to a very large extent, has come and does come to us only in the letter? It is often very beautiful, and as a lovely picture may be most ardently admired, but after all it is dead—it is lifeless; it is but a picture—a soul-less representation! If we but knew the *power* of the truth which we hold in theory, it would give us the consciousness, not of carrying, but of being carried, as in "the chariots of Amminadib;" not of having a burden to bear, but of being upborne by the everlasting arms, and carried by the eagle wings of Him who brought us unto Himself in the wilderness—not that

He should be a wilderness to us, as the Lord touchingly reminds Israel, a land of darkness; but that in His light we should see light. Alas! that we should look elsewhere, and trusting some sparks of our own, find again and again that we have but to lie down in sorrow.

But there is another aspect of this subject. The result of truth received in the letter is not merely negative in its character, it is not only a loss, but it is a positive detriment. "The letter killeth." When the sun shines on the deep, good soil, it brings the seed sown in it to perfection; but shining on the stony ground, it withers the rootless plants and proves the shallowness of the soil on which the seed was sown. It had no depth, and therefore it withered away. Practically, what does this teach us?

Looking around on our fellow-Christians with whom we come in contact, we notice on the one hand many rejoicing in their Saviour and happy in His truth. Of this stamp was a poor woman scarcely able to read, but full of joy in the Lord, who on being asked what she read in the Testament, said, "The fourteenth of John;" and when asked what she read when she came to the end of it, replied, "I just begin again." Her theology was very much confined to that blessed chapter, but it did its work: it linked her heart to her Saviour, whom she found to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life. She received the truth in spirit, and it became the joy and the rejoicing of her heart.

On the other hand, we notice many contending for Scriptural truth, clear in their conception, but cold in their affection and lifeless in their walk; on whose head the tongue of fire seems never to have descended, and in whose soul no flame is burning; in whom knowledge kindles no joy and awakens no gladness.

Few can have failed thankfully to notice, and to rejoice at, the minimum of truth that can fill a believing soul with joy unspeakable; and few can have

failed to witness the painful spectacle of a maximum of truth received in an unexercised conscience, which has only blighted and marred all that it comes in contact with, deadening in its influence on him who possesses it, and also on those who are brought under its power.

This aspect of the subject is fearfully solemn, and explains why it is that the most enlightened in the letter are often the most deadening in their influence. Truth is learned by the majority too easily; it is taken up in the flesh, ministered in the flesh, used for the flesh, and consequently God blows upon it.

Ministry may kill, not because it is untrue, not because the truth is not set forth, but because an intellectual acquaintance with the truth of God may in teacher and taught lead them into the dreary land of lifeless orthodoxy. Error blinds, but truth held in the letter only doubly blinds.

The truth of God is like Himself, gracious, loving, holy, and gentle, and is as "the wisdom that is from above," "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruit, without partiality and without hypocrisy." But when the truth of God is taken up in the wisdom of the flesh, is learnt in the letter and not in the spirit and power of a new life, then the wisdom, whatever the abstract truth may be that it lays hold on and uses for itself, is a "wisdom that descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish," and will always be accompanied with "envying and strife, confusion, and every evil work."

We say again, the truth must be held in the spirit, and ministered in the unction of the Holy One, if it is to quicken the lifelessness around us, or the deadness of our own souls. All truth received in the spirit conforms into the image of Christ, who is the Truth and the Life. He who holds the truth is like Christ, and he who is not Christlike does not hold the truth, however much he may hold of the letter: "for he is

not a Jew who is one outwardly but he is a Jew who is one inwardly;" and "circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God."

So it ever will be that the praise is not of men; pride and party spirit have no place here, and the humble follower of Jesus must be content to seek that praise which cometh from God only. Of all zeal, party zeal and zeal for the letter is the most deadly, for it uses the sword of God's truth against God's own friends, and the partizan is esteemed not for his likeness to the Lowly One, but for his ability and willingness to sacrifice all on the altar of a truth that is devoid of its spirit and its life.

To many this train of thought will bring back painful recollections, but it may perhaps serve to explain why it has been that much that has from time to time promised very fair in the Church of God has ended in confusion, not because it began in error, but because the spirit of the truth has been forgotten, and a self-constituted orthodoxy in creed has become the ultimate aim. When such has become the case, there are none so merciless as those under its influence, ever ready, like the false mother, to say in conscious superiority to all feeling, and in the cold indifference of a heartless zeal, "Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it." Far other are the feelings of the rightful mother, and such feelings indicate the relative difference between the true and the false, between zeal for our orthodoxy and zeal for Christ and His truth.

This canker has spread far and wide, and is engendering a spirit of harsh discipline and of un-Christian tyranny over conscience, the tendency of which is to cultivate an outward adhesion to the letter of the truth and an inward disregard to its spirit. Truth thus held in the letter becomes a two-edged sword, which many will be ever found prone to use with a harsh justice untempered with mercy, and who therein

will fulfil Satan's behest and not Christ's, the will of the flesh and not the mind of the Spirit.

The result is, that instead of the self-consuming zeal of the blessed Master who said, "The zeal of thy house has eaten me up," a Jehu-like zeal takes its place. An apparent zeal for the honour of God is substituted for the far harder and deeper consecration of all to God; a consecration which is essential, if the truth is to come not "in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." May we be enabled *so* to hold the letter in the spirit, that in the perfect harmony of *both*, we may worship and serve in spirit and in truth.

ON COMMUNION WITH GOD.

A VERY profitable lesson may be learned as to communion with God from a little reflection on the two places Hebron and Gerar as they are spoken of in the book of Genesis.

If we look at Genesis xiii. 18, we find Abraham dwelling in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and he built *there* an altar unto the Lord. Abraham was dwelling in the land which God had promised him for a possession, and he was dwelling in that part of it that was especially good, for Hebron means "*society*," or "*friendship*." Thus Abraham was in the place where he had not only the good of the land, but also communion with God—God's "*society*" and "*friendship*," as we may see in His converse with him.

So it is with us. If we want to be in the place of blessing we must be in the place of *obedience*; we must walk by faith, and *dwell in the land* in communion with God in "*heavenly places in Christ Jesus*." Our blessings are all treasured up in Christ, and can *only* be enjoyed by faith, as we have fellowship with Him. He is our treasure-house, and it is our privilege and joy to receive *continual* supplies from Him. All the

promises of God are yea and amen in Him, and these promises are our *present* portion. We should be strangers and pilgrims here, sojourners in a land which is not our rest, and *waiting* for the heavenly inheritance which the Lord has promised us. Therefore we must walk by *faith*; for faith alone can realize that though we have nothing, yet "all things are ours." (2 Cor. vi. 10.)

Like Abraham too, if walking by faith, we may be enabled to deliver some poor erring brother, who may through worldliness have brought himself into a place of judgment—one who, like Lot, preferred the well-watered plain of Jordan to the plain of Mamre in Hebron, and imperceptibly got into Sodom, and is so far gone in worldliness as to become involved in the judgment of those with whom he is found, and lose all that he had.

It is in this place of fellowship with God that the soul *proves* that *He* is a *satisfying* portion, and learns to say to the world as Abraham said to the King of Sodom, "I will not take anything of thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abraham rich." Is this *your* determination, beloved reader? Have you said to the world, I will take NOTHING from thee?

Communion or fellowship with God is indeed the *richest* portion which God can give us, and as we enjoy it we *prove* that He has made an everlasting covenant with us, ordered in all things and sure, and that our sins and iniquities are remembered no more. (Compare Genesis xvii. 9 to 14 with Col. ii. 11-13 and Heb. x. 17.) In this place of *fellowship* God will also manifest Himself to us, and give us most unexpected blessings, even "above all we ask or think," as in Genesis xviii. where God appears to Abraham, and promises him a son.

It was in Hebron (*society* or *friendship*) that God told Abraham that He was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, and as *we* have fellowship with God, we

also shall learn that judgment is coming on the world. *There* also Abraham prayed for those cities, and "God remembered Abraham," and delivered Lot. And those who are living in communion with God, who are obedient children, not fashioning themselves after the course of this wicked world, can come *boldly* to a throne of grace, and intercede with God, not only for themselves, but for their brethren, who, sad to say, are often found in the midst of worldliness.

It was in Hebron also that Abraham buried Sarah—he could *there* "bury his dead out of his sight." So if *we* are like Abraham, dwelling in the plain of Mamre, in Hebron, enjoying all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, we shall be enabled to rise above every trial, and to delight ourselves in the Lord our God; we shall love neither the world, nor the things that are in the world, knowing that we have in heaven "a better and an enduring substance," and be able to count *all* things (no matter what) but dung, that we may win Christ and get increased fellowship with Him.

All this that we have been looking at with regard to Abraham was connected with His sojourning in Hebron. Let us now look a little at him and Isaac, when they left Hebron and went to Gerar; and a very solemn lesson does this movement teach us. He had been sojourning in Hebron, where he enjoyed communion with God: he had the *society* of God there, he enjoyed the *friendship* of God: it is to *His* friends that He makes known His ways. (See John xv. 15.) But Abraham leaves this place and goes to "Gerar,"—mark, to "Gerar;" that is, *combat* or *dispute*, and also *pilgrimage*.

But where was Gerar situated? Alas! it was situated where all who are not single-eyed and true-hearted have a desire to go. If we turn to Gen. x. 19, we find that Gerar was on the *border* of *Canaan*, "as thou goest unto Sodom and Gomorrah." Oh, what a step for such an one as Abraham to take! Who would have thought

that he would make so sad a mistake? But so it was.

“And Abraham journeyed from thence [Hebron] toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar.” (Gen. xx. 1.) Mark, he dwelled *between* Kadesh and Shur. Now *Kadesh* means “holiness,” and Shur was a *wilderness*.

The atmosphere of the saint must be “holiness”—to be “holy in all manner of conversation and godliness.” He must also be in wilderness circumstances, not in the world which is “at rest,” as we read in Zech. i. 11, but in principle “having no certain dwelling place,” sitting loose to all below. These, and such only, are true wilderness circumstances; and if we try to get rid of them or avoid them we lose our former joy in communion, and leave the good land, the “heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” “all *spiritual blessings*,” and like Abraham we come to Gerar.

Ah, beloved reader, it will not do *between* Kadesh and Shur, *between* holiness and the wilderness on the borders of the land, as if trying to have the *name* of being sincere Christians, *without the gain of joy in the Lord*. Remember that Gerar was “as thou *goest* unto Sodom and Gomorrah.” As soon as there is the very least decline in communion, that moment we are on the way to Gerar—the place of dispute with the world—like Abraham and Isaac with the Philistines, though still retaining the *character* of pilgrimage.

But what was the result of such a movement with Abraham? He denied his wife, and made a covenant with Abimelech. Fearful indeed.

When Isaac went to Gerar he fell into the same snare. God told him not to go into Egypt, and *he did not go there*, but he went to Gerar, to the King of the Philistines. (See Genesis xxvi. 1–6.) He went to Gerar, denied his wife, and made a covenant with the King of the Philistines: *just the very sins his father committed there*.

Beloved reader, surely all this is very solemn. If we lose our joy in the Lord in communion, there is no knowing where it may lead us. As Abraham and Isaac denied their wives, so shall we deny our relationship to our precious Jesus, and be found holding fellowship with the world.

It is remarkable that both with Abraham and Isaac *the very thing* they dreaded and sought to avoid by prevaricating—the loss of their wives—*did* come upon them *both*, but through the abounding grace of God their wives were restored to them again. (Read Gen. xx., xxvi.) Isaac was also obliged to dig the very same wells which Abraham had previously digged in Gerar, and he called them by the same names. Observe he has to *dig them again*, because the Philistines had filled them with *earth*.

So is it with those who turn towards the world and make a compromise with it. They are not indeed belonging to the world, but so *near* to it, and so near to those “who mind earthly things,” that the earthly things are *continually filling their wells*, and thus hinder them from enjoying “perfect peace,” that peace which passeth all understanding; and also prevent them from “*drinking abundantly*” of the wells of salvation.

Yes, though we may be digging, and digging, and digging away at the wells that others have already dug, aye, or even dig *new wells* too, yet if we go into the way of temptation, we shall be just as Isaac was. He was *too near* the Philistines to have peace. We may find the “living waters” even there (see ver. 29, margin), but still there is no peace—too near the world, there is nothing but *contention* and *hatred*.

It will ever be thus with us if in Gerar. We must *remove from thence*, and then we shall “*have room*” to serve the Lord. We must come out from among them, and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and *then* we shall prove that the Lord Almighty is a Father unto us, and we His sons and daughters.

TURNING ASIDE TO SEE.

JUDGES xiv.

OF Caleb, to his honour, it is written five times, "He wholly followed the Lord." What was the secret of his holy and successful service? "Because he had *another Spirit.*" (Num. xiv. 24.)

Of Simeon, to his renown, we read, "The same was just, devout, waiting." Where lay this holy sire's power of life? "*The Holy Ghost was upon him.*" (Luke ii. 25.)

Again we have the Lord's martyr Stephen brought forward in the list of worthies, who in this dispensation honoured the Spirit of God. He was full of faith and power, and did great wonders, "*being full of the Holy Ghost.*" (Acts vii. 55.)

And, beloved child of God, in these dark days of gross spiritual error, when men's minds and human productions are almost deified, and God's holy word and Spirit are so dishonoured, how indispensably necessary is it, for those who would be true followers of God's obedient Lamb, that they should honour the gentle leadings of the heavenly dove, who Himself declares, "your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost."

How often have we sung with longing hearts—

"I long to be like Jesus, meek, lowly, loving, mild;
I long to be like Jesus, the Father's holy Child!"

Yet how unlike Him still are we, and that because the Holy Spirit is so often grieved by our *turning aside* after the vain world, in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.

Jesus could say, "I do always those things which please Him." "The Spirit was not given by measure unto Him." Wherefore, beloved, let us who have the first-fruits of the Spirit not be unwise, but, under-

standing what the will of the Lord is, ever "be filled with the Spirit." (Eph. v. 18.)

What a sad, solemn history does Samson present to us! He was raised up and honoured by God from his birth; yet, alas! he disobeyed and dishonoured God to the day of his death, and that too by being turned aside by the lust of the eye.

First we find Samson seeking occasion against the uncircumcised Philistines; for God's people were under their dominion. So far Samson was doing well; and so far as we in the Spirit war against the flesh, we also do well; for God says, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." And God will help us as He helped Samson, whenever we seek occasion against it. But be sure Satan will be inveterate, if we seek to mortify the sphere of his working. Thus, as soon as Samson came to the Philistine's vineyard, "behold, a young lion roared against him. But the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon Samson, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had *nothing in his hand.*"

Oh that we, beloved—called, chosen, sanctified ones of God—were more, as individuals, under the Spirit's mighty power in these evil days, "because *your* adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour." Instead of resorting to the expediencies and carnal unions of the worldly-wise for Satan's dethronement, may we know that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."

Samson had *nothing* in his hand. He needed nothing. The victory was "not by might nor by power, but by *my* Spirit, saith the Lord." But how soon do we forget all this, and, after victory in the Spirit, walk in the flesh, vainly puffed up in our minds, forgetting that if Satan cannot overthrow us in his roaring attacks, he will seek to entrap us as the wily serpent.

If Samson had only walked under the might of that victory-gaining Spirit, how much misery he would

have saved himself, and at the same time maintained God's glory! "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."

Now look at the dark side of Samson's Spirit-grieving history. "He *went down* and *talked* with the Philistine woman, and she *pleased Samson well*." Who would have believed that after such a victory by God, Samson could have found pleasure in the abhorred of God? How the flesh lusteth against the Spirit!

Mark, he first *saw* her. Hence came the lust of the eye. Next he talks with her, and she pleased him well—there was the lust of the flesh; and we may be sure the pride of life in acting independently of God and His Spirit will not be far off, and "when pride cometh, then cometh shame;" for "pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

"And after a time he returned to take her, and he *turned aside* to see the carcase of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion."

Observe, it was a *dead thing* that Samson turned aside to see—the carcase of an unclean animal, of which the Lord had said, "Every one that toucheth them shall be unclean;" and again, "Ye shall have their carcases in abomination." But *what* had *he* to do with dead things? Was he not a Nazarite, dedicated, consecrated, and separated to God? And was it not the law of the Nazarite that he should come near no dead thing, nor defile himself thereby?

And yet, beloved Christian, consecrated to God by the most precious blood of Christ, alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, and sanctified to God by the holy indwelling Spirit, what a light thing do we often make of turning aside to see the dead things of this death-doomed world, and partaking of its corroding sweets. How often do we hear it said by God's dear children, 'I am only just going to *see* this thing or place, only just going to speak to that person.'

'Surely,' they argue, 'there can be no harm in just seeing, or in having a little (so called) harmless chat,' forgetting, alas! that the vow of consecration is on them.

Oh, how many inconsistent purchases have been made by women professing godliness, who have only just turned aside to see a well-stocked shop-window, where Satan, apparently dead, lies coiled amidst the fineries, flowers, and follies, and so the body, the temple of the Holy Ghost, has been defiled, decorated with death's daisies! How often a mere conversation has led to an unhallowed engagement, a miserable marriage, and the spiritual life of souls has been sapped! Beware of grieving the Spirit by either going down to *talk*, or turning aside to *see* the dead things or persons of this cursed, corrupting, and corroding world, lying in the wicked one!

Now see how easily, after going down and turning aside in the will of the flesh, Samson is tempted and overcome. There lies the lion's carcass; but instead of repelling Samson by its offensiveness in death, we actually see him nearing it, touching it, and eating something out of it. Surely Samson must have forgotten what he was to God; and surely we often *forget* that it is written, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing."

How should we seek ever to be so under the Spirit's control and leadership, that we may be delivered from all the snares and allurements of Satan's setting, who only seeks to cast down from their excellency those whom God has exalted!

How unhappy is the succeeding career of Samson. Having once succumbed and yielded to the lust of the eye, that lust becomes stronger and stronger with every temptation, till at last, like a mighty receding wave, it sucks in its victim on a sea of sin, and he becomes perfectly helpless to battle with the conflicting elements.

The Spirit grieved, and body and mind a wreck, he is only fit to *grind* out a miserable existence in earth's reducing prison-chains of retribution, and is made the sport of a gainsaying world, ever ready to say, "Ah! ah! so would we have it." "Whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap; he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption."

Samson had sowed to the lust of the eye: the result is his eyes are bored out. "He *went down* to Timnath, and *saw* a woman." "He *went down* and *talked* with the woman, and she pleased him well." "Then went Samson to Gaza, and *saw* there an harlot, and went in unto her." "And it came to pass afterwards that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek."

Oh, my fellow-believer, God deliver you and me from being lust-led as Samson was. There is only one specific against it, that is, to be Spirit-led, to walk in the Spirit, to pray in the Spirit, and to be filled with the Spirit. Remember that the very ones by whom Samson's lustful eyes were led captive were the very medium of his losing his eyes, being shorn of his strength, grinding in the prison, and becoming the sport of the uncircumcised. So, beloved child of God, be sure that unless you honour God's Holy Spirit, by which you are sealed unto the day of redemption, the eyes of your spiritual understanding will become dim, your joy in communion with your Lord will be extinguished, your soul will be shorn of its strength, and you led captive by Satan at his will; a shame to the church, a byword to the world, a dishonour to your Lord, and perhaps you will only just get strength, like Samson, to win faith's victory in life's last moment.

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God;" "but be filled with the Spirit." May we indeed only seek to glorify God in our bodies and spirits which are God's. Amen.

WILDERNESS TRAINING.

NUMBERS xiv.; JOSHUA iii.

AMONG the many lessons which Israel's history affords us, the result of their wilderness training is a very instructive and encouraging one. We are familiar with their long course of rebellion and murmuring, but all may not have considered the question as to the *profit* they derived from the Lord's wondrous dealings with them. (Heb. xii. 10.)

This is an important point for us, for we are prone to think that trials are sent when we can see no adequate reason, and are tempted to say with Job, "He breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without cause."

The growth of a child is a slow process, but easily discernible after a lapse of time. So also is the training of children. The daily watching and nurture of the parents may be assiduously carried out in one case, and neglected in another, and a casual observer may think the difference unimportant; but when the children are grown up, the contrast will be but too manifest. (Prov. xxii. 6.) Similar effects are more quickly traced in things of rapid growth. The field of the slothful and that of the diligent are soon distinguishable.

The same principle applies to Israel: the wilderness was God's school (Hosea xi. 3), where they slowly learned His will. Let us glance at two distant events in their history in which the similarity of the circumstances enables us to make a comparison as to their progress. In both cases they are brought to the border of the promised land, and in both they enter it, but their conduct on these two occasions enables us very easily to mark the result of their training.

At Kadesh-barnea, disappointed and unbelieving, they weep for vexation, and murmur; they rebel, saying, "Let us make us a captain, and let us return

into Egypt;" they are ready to stone the two faithful servants of the Lord. When the solemn judgment of the Lord on their oft-repeated provocation is pronounced, instead of being humbled, they try to set it aside by further transgression, "We *will* go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised." They refuse to hearken to the word of Moses, "Go not up, for the Lord is not among you, that ye be not smitten before your enemies. . . . *Ye are turned away from the Lord, therefore the Lord will not be with you.*" "But they *presumed* to go up unto the hill top; nevertheless the Ark of the covenant of the Lord, and Moses, departed not out of the camp."

What a picture have we here of determined self-will. Their confession of wrong-doing merely came from their *lips*: "We have sinned," said they, but "we *will* go up." We do well to ponder on this subject, and to try of what manner of spirit *we* are.

The scene at the crossing of Jordan is indeed a pleasant contrast. They listen to the command of the Lord, and submissively *wait* for the appointed signal to move, and then, in ordered array, and at measured distance, they reverently follow that glorious Covenant-Ark, until it is borne to Jordan's brink, and stays its mighty waters. Then, as each one of Israel's host crosses, he has to pass that holy Ark, with its blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, whose presence restrains the up-lifted flood that else would have destroyed him, and thus he learns the grace and power of God.

Surely we cannot think of these two scenes without saying "What hath God wrought!" Should not our hearts bow, and own the love, and wisdom, and patience of that God who led Israel about, and instructed them, and who is now likewise caring for us? As we see the blessed results in Israel's case, may we seek more holy heart-subjection to *all* the dealings of our heavenly Father, and more readiness to follow our Lord Jesus.

Israel's attitude with respect to the Ark (that precious symbol of Christ) revealed their state. In the one case, with their back turned to it, and their ears closed against the Word of God, they go their own way up the hill, only to prove their own impotence and the destroying power of their enemies. In the other, *after near forty years of training*, they obey the voice of the Lord, and *follow the Ark*,—yea, for seven days they accompany it round Jericho, and even *seven* times on the seventh day, and then prove the mighty power of God in the utter destruction of their foes.

“What think ye of Christ?” is the test for everyone. It not only distinguishes the saved from the unsaved, but one child of God from another, and it tells how far each one has learned to follow Him. Let us ask ourselves, Which are we most like—Israel at Kadesh or at Jordan?

If our will is unsubdued, our back turned to Christ when we please, our ear closed against His gracious voice, we may have to learn what Hormah means—*destruction*. It will be in vain that in such a state we talk about our “spiritual blessings,” and about our “heavenly places.” They are only to be enjoyed “in Christ,” and we have need to learn more of Him so as to be attracted to *follow* Him; then, so long as we do so, we may be led on like Israel in the path of victory and blessing. The one who could say, “I can do *all things* through Christ who strengtheneth me,” said previously, “I *have learned* in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” May we be thus *learning*, remembering also what Israel learnt at Kadesh, “Without Me ye can do nothing.”

In contemplating this portion of Israel's history, we ought not to pass over the solemn fact that all the men fell in the wilderness except Caleb and Joshua, who alone “followed fully.” A sorrowful experience must theirs have been indeed. May we seek to avoid it (Heb. iii. 12), and by faith press on to enjoy the pre-

sent earnest of our inheritance, thankful to the Lord for all His long-suffering and patience—all the riches of His grace which abounds to us in far greater measure than it did to Israel.

A FEW THOUGHTS ON THE LORD'S SUPPER.

It is perhaps impossible to overestimate the importance of the Lord's Supper to the Christian. It is the spiritual answer to the commemoration of the passover, and the feast of unleavened bread, as commanded by God to Israel. This is indubitably proved by those precious words—"Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

The Lord's Supper is not merely a memorial of the death and sufferings of our blessed Lord, but it is also a feast where our heavenly Father invites us to eat and drink, yea, feast with Him on the same divine food as He Himself delights in. Marvellous miracle of grace! Poor, wretched, worthless sinners are brought into God's own banqueting house, and fed with the very bread of God—even Christ Himself. God finds His constant joy and satisfaction in His well-beloved Son, and He presents this precious Son to us, gives Him to us as our very own, and bids us eat His flesh and drink His blood, and thus continually receive nourishment and strength.

No stranger or uncircumcised person, no hired servant was suffered to eat the passover; and only those who have been redeemed and cleansed from their sins by the precious blood of Christ, made children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and separated from the world by the Spirit of God, have any right to partake of the Lord's Supper. Indeed no others are invited or welcomed by God, nor even permitted by Him to partake of His sacred feast.

How important is this truth, and how careful we should be to see that all who venture to eat of this bread and drink of this wine, are those whose hearts have been sprinkled from an evil conscience, as manifested by the confession of their lips and the testimony of their lives, and are thus made capable of feeding upon the flesh and blood of Christ. It is an awful thing to make a mockery of this most solemn mystery of the faith of God's elect, and surely all who eat this bread and drink this wine with uncleansed hearts and consciences, do trample upon the Son of God, and treat the blood of His covenant as if it were an unholy or common thing. May the Lord preserve us from thus dishonouring Him, and eating and drinking judgment to ourselves.

It is remarkable that the passover lamb was commanded to be eaten "roast with fire." "Eat not of it raw nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head, with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof." Other sacrifices, such as the peace-offering, part of which was burnt upon the altar as a sweet savour to God, and the remainder eaten by the priests and the worshippers, were permitted to be boiled; but here the command is very stringent that it was to be roasted whole—and why? Is it not especially to bring before our souls the *sufferings* of Christ? In the Lord's Supper (as typified by the passover) the suffering, bleeding, dying Lamb of God is presented to us, and He asks us to remember Him as the One who suffered thus for us.

We may and should continually delight in Jesus as the loving gracious One, whose every thought and word was most precious to God. We joy in Him as the One whose heart was intent upon His Father's business, and whose meat and drink was to do His will. But in the Lord's Supper, Christ is presented to us as enduring the fire of God's wrath for our sins; and here the type comes short of the dread reality. The

passover lamb was first slain, and then roast with fire, but the sufferings of our blessed Lord preceded His death. He was scorched, withered up, consumed with the intensity of that wrath. His heart melted like wax, and the fire entered into His bones, while the face of His God was averted from Him. Though His holy soul cried, yea, roared with groanings unutterable, yet His prayer was shut out, and His cry unheard—He was forsaken. Oh, who can tell the agony He endured, the price He paid to redeem our souls from hell!

“Well He remembers Calvary,
Nor let His saints forget.”

The whole of the passover lamb might be eaten, “his head, with his legs, with the purtenance thereof.” So God has given us a whole Christ to feed on—all He is, and all He has, and all He has done. His deep unfathomable love, His mighty strength and power, His infinite wisdom and matchless grace and tenderness, all, all is given to us: all is our present portion, and all may be enjoyed and fed upon according to the measure of our spiritual apprehension and appetite.

The lamb was fed upon during the night, and surely it is night with us now in the world, but blessed be God we can rejoicingly testify—“The night is far spent, the day is at hand.” We are *in* the night but not *of* it, for we are children of the day, and we are waiting for that bright morning without clouds, when Christ shall come again and receive us to Himself, that where He is we may be also. But *now* is the time to *feed* on Jesus, and *only* as we feed on Him shall we grow like Him, or have strength and power to walk with Him, and do His will.

We feed on Him *now* (during the night) by faith with thanksgiving; He is the true and only nourishment of our souls. Our spiritual stature depends on how much we feed on Jesus. We can only get power

to mortify the flesh and grow up into His likeness by receiving continual and abundant supplies of the bread of life, and our future place in the acquired glory will correspond with our *present* likeness to Christ here.

The morning will soon be here, and as Israel were not permitted to eat the remainder of the lamb in the morning, so when we see Him as He is we shall no longer be able to feed on Him *by faith*. We shall be with Him and like Him, and shall eternally enjoy uninterrupted and unhindered fellowship with Him, and He will be our constant and eternal joy. Then faith will be changed to sight, and prayer to praise; but we shall no longer have the opportunity of glorifying Him by drawing strength from Him to overcome the sin that dwells in us, and the enemies who oppose us.

This is the time and the only time for feeding on the unseen Lamb of God, and this is the time to prove the mighty sustaining power of His flesh which is meat indeed, and His blood which is drink indeed. Oh may we be more earnest and intent on partaking of the Lamb roast with fire, and thus prove for ourselves the mighty transforming power of this blessed feast which our God spreads for us while passing through the wilderness.

GATHERING TOGETHER IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS.

1 PETER i. 18.

God's ways are very plain, whether in regard to the salvation of the soul, the believer's walk, or the assembling together of His children. Only let us be simple, and there need be no doubt about any of these things.

Wisdom hath builded *her* house; she hath hewn out its perfect supports, provided all needful things, and cries, "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither. As for him that *wanteth* understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled, forsake the foolish and live,

and go in the way of understanding." (Comp. Prov. viii. Eph. v. 14-17, and Col. i. 9, 10.)

The blood of Christ has not only redeemed us from hell and the world, but it has also redeemed us from all we previously walked in, and from every religious connexion which we have not received directly from God. (1 Peter i. 18; compare Phil. iii. 4-7.)

It is important then to know how believers are to gather together on the Lord's day, and for what purpose they so gather. Let us be simple, and the word of God will not fail to point this out; and may we all have grace to follow.

In Eph. i. 23 we learn that the Church is the body of Christ. He is the Head, and every believer in Him is a member of His body. (1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.) In Eph. v. 26, 27, we learn that *He* is the nourisher and cherisher of this body. Each member depends on the Head for nourishment and guidance in all things. For this purpose Christ has given pastors and teachers (Eph. iv.); that is, they are given by the Head, and are responsible to Him.

In Rom. xii. we learn that each member, according to the proportion of *faith*, is to minister to the other members; in other words, in whatever service they can lean on God for *His* countenance and help, they are to do it as of the ability which *God* giveth. (1 Peter iv. 10; Rom. xii.; 1 Cor. xii.)

God designed this union of Head and members to be manifested now; but how is this to be done? Some say *by creeds*. So says Rome, but such is not the mind of the Spirit. It is *by "holding the Head,"* in other words, by the subjection of each member to the Head in all things. To take the ground of the One body, *without* holding the Head, is mere presumption.

Suppose part of the Prussian army during the late war had taken its orders from Napoleon, and a part from King William, what would have been the result? *Confusion*. But holding King William as head, re-

ceiving supplies from him, obeying *his* orders and no other, all France felt it was one army. It might have proclaimed itself the Prussian army, but unless it held the one head it could never be manifested as one.

Even so the Church can only be manifested as *one body* by holding the *Head*, and all schisms are the result of taking orders from man, *instead of taking the word of Jesus alone.* (1 Cor. i. 11-13.)

The Church of God means the *assembly of God*; it is so spoken of in 1 Cor. i. 2 and Philemon 2. Where is it now? Matt. xviii. 20 will help us. "Where two or three are gathered together *in my name*, there am I in the midst."

In 1 Cor. v. 4, the believers are called on to put away a wicked person *in the name* of our Lord Jesus Christ. The act was theirs, but they were to do it *in His name*; just as one person may be authorized to draw on another's bank account—he would draw *in his name*. Even so, "where two or three are gathered *in my name*, there am I in the midst."

If we have not His authority for gathering as we do, we are not gathered *in His name*; but, blessed be His name, He does bless *in measure*, though we own Him not.

Suppose Parliament were summoned for Monday by the Queen. Meeting on that day, they would be met *in her name*. But suppose twelve months after they were to assemble of their own accord, to do as they liked, they would *not* be met in her name, because they had not her authority. Hence the importance of having the Lord's authority for meeting on the Lord's day. Blessed be His name, we have both His authority and the object given us in 1 Cor. xi. 23. We see there from what Paul *received of the Lord* to deliver unto us that we are to assemble on the first day of the week, to remember *His death till He come*; and in Acts xx. 7 we find disciples and Paul meeting for this purpose. Thus they were gathered *in His name*, because gathered

by His authority; the Holy Ghost working in them to will and to do of *His good pleasure* in this matter.

But why does the Lord Jesus say "two or three" in Matt. xviii. 20? Just because He foresaw evil days, as Paul did in Acts xx. 30, when men would substitute their own wills in Church matters for *the will of the Lord*; and now *even* two or three may know that Christ is in their midst.

In Revelation i.—iii. the companies of believers addressed are looked at in their responsibility to Jesus as *Lord*—that is, as the One who has a right to the place of authority in their midst. The Son of Man is there seen with eyes as a flame of fire in the *midst* of the *seven golden candlesticks*, which are interpreted in chap. i. 20 to be the seven churches. Now, there are two things very plain from these chapters and the other epistles.

1. The churches are *individually* responsible to the *Lord alone*.

2. The Lord does not blame one assembly for the faults of another; He deals with them one by one, both in Revelation i.—iii. and in the epistles, reserving His own right to disown a candlestick when the *light is gone*.

But some may say the assemblies should be manifested as *one*. True; but this can only be by owning the *one Lord*, and just in proportion as all the assemblies own *His* authority, and *judge all that is contrary to His Word*, will they be seen to be under the guidance of our unseen Lord.

The stars declare the glory of God by yielding to the guidance of God in their courses: even so will the assemblies of God show forth that God is not the author of *confusion*, by *owning the one Lord* as their authority for all they do, which must always be *according to the Word*. Man has tried by rules to keep assemblies together, and man is trying this now; but this can only end in failure.

May the Lord grant that each member of the *body* of Christ may own the *Head*, and seek to comfort, help, and admonish *all* the members as he has opportunity. And may each assembly of two or three (or more) seek to walk in the fear of Him, who is in the midst of all His assemblies, with eyes as a flame of fire, to discern and judge every departure *from His Word*; and so walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, be multiplied to His glory and praise. (Acts ix. 31.)

THE POWER OF THE CROSS.

To the Christian the cross changes everything. In the world on which he stands he sees but the platform upon which that cross has been set up.

All the glory, and the beauty, and the greatness of earth, is dimmed and darkened in his eyes by the shadow of the cross on which his Saviour—his Friend—was put to shame. He seeks no home, where his Lover had “not where to lay His head;” no joy, where his Master was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” He takes no honours from the hands that “platted a crown of thorns” for the brow of his right royal Lord. The praise and blame of men, who chose Barabbas and rejected Jesus, are alike unworthy of his regard. Public opinion weighs not as a feather with him; for he cannot forget with what perfect unanimity that most unrighteous judgment was called for by all, both Jew and Gentile, high and low, men of the world, and men of religion. And if ever his heart would tempt him to heed the world’s opinion, should he not be recalled by the fierce cry, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” that still rings in his ear from Calvary?

To the “treasures of Egypt,” the honours of royal courts, the “pleasures of sin,” and the wrath of kings, like Moses, he is indifferent,—nay, to him it would be

a loss and disgrace to get honour and gifts from hands stained with the blood of his dear Redeemer.

A citizen of heaven, and therefore "a stranger and pilgrim" on earth, his politics relate to a more glorious kingdom than any that glitter here—in glory that belongs of right to David's son. His sins he hates, as he hates the nails that pierced his Saviour's body; and even of self, his natural self, he can say, "I have been crucified with Christ," therefore he desires to know and own himself no more as a man of earth, of Adam's sinful stock, but as dead and risen again with Christ, in the power of a new and endless life.

All this makes the world in no way friendly to him; and as they did to his Master, so would they do to the servant. He is crucified to the world, yet he is content—yea, and exceeding glad "to be accounted worthy to suffer shame for His name," knowing that if the world esteem him as "the filth of the earth, and the offscouring of all things," yet that "God is not ashamed to be called his God."

Blind and deaf to things below, he walks in the full view of "things not seen as yet." His bright and happy home, his present and eternal rest, his glorious reward, his divine Friend, his honour, pleasures, wealth, all are unseen and unknown by his enemies, but seen, known, and enjoyed through faith by him.

While men around him are intoxicated with ambition of earthly prosperity, or fearfully anticipating the dread unknown future, he quietly watches every day for the coming of His Lord from heaven to receive him unto Himself, and comfort his heart with the assurance that He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Thus he is enabled to "endure as seeing Him who is invisible;" and his "light affliction which is but for a moment," he reckons not worthy to be compared with the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" which is soon and certainly to be his own.

JESUS, THE ASCENDED SAVIOUR.

THE life of the Lord Jesus Christ upon earth as recorded in the four gospels is very marvellous. His words, His ways, His acts, are replete with interest and full of wonder, and unveil to us One whose heart continually overflowed with love and tenderness, and who was intently set upon pleasing and glorifying God. But His *present* position and occupation in heaven, where He is seated in the highest glory, is if possible more wonderful still.

We look back with peculiar interest upon His life on earth, because we know that it was *all* for us, and that love—deep, amazing, irrepressible, and unquenchable love—was the one sustaining and prevailing motive which actuated and filled His holy soul. And with the eye of faith, we may follow Him up to the highest heaven, where He is now seated, and *there* see Him, *still* occupied for us, intent upon our interests, watching over us, and unweariedly ministering to our continually recurring and ever varying need. Well may we sing of Him

“Lord, in all Thy power and glory,
 Still Thy thoughts and eyes are here;
 Watching o'er Thy ransom'd people,
 To Thy gracious heart so dear.
 Thou for us art interceding,
 Everlasting is Thy love,
 And a blessed rest preparing,
 In our Father's house above.”

The first words which the Holy Ghost has recorded for our instruction and blessing, as falling from the lips of the blessed Jesus (that holy child in whose heart no sin had ever entered, and no foolish thought had ever found a place) were these—“How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?” We well know the memorable occasion on which they were uttered.

Even at that early age of twelve years, His heart was intently set upon His Father's business. It was His Father's business that brought Him down from the brightest glory to the deepest shame and woe. That business was to work out and provide salvation for poor lost guilty sinners. It was for this He lived, for this He toiled, for this He groaned and bled, and died a death of ignominious agony. This was the one big thought that filled His heart; and at the end of His course we hear Him triumphantly declare—"I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." And as in weakness He was expiring on the cross, we hear the mighty Victor's cry—"It is finished! . . . Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit; and having said thus, He gave up the Ghost."

Yes, Jesus lived, and died, and lives again for us. God has made Him to be everything to us; the one centre of all our hopes and affections; the One around whom our every thought should revolve. This is God's will concerning us, and therefore He has not left us in doubt as to where Jesus is, or as to what He is doing; but in marvellous grace He has opened heaven to us, and shewn us Jesus *there*.

Again and again our gracious God draws aside the curtain, and presents Him to us in the glory, intently and continually occupied about our business. As our Advocate with the Father, He is ever living to make intercession for us. His heart and His eyes are here, perpetually watching over the precious members of His body, considering and meeting the need of each, and enriching and blessing one and all. Not a lamb of His flock is untended by Him; not a single sheep is forgotten. The wilful, the wayward, the sick, and the careless, all—all are watched over and ministered to according to their respective need, while the sad and the sorrowful, the careworn, afflicted, and weary, are His peculiar charge, to whom He gives freely of the new wine of the kingdom.

There are several passages in the Acts in which Jesus is very blessedly presented as personally ministering to His saints, who are still threading their way through this weary world. Let us call some of these to remembrance, beginning with one in the history of Stephen.

We read of Stephen that he was "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." This is what we all ought to be, and all should be, if we did but cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart, and seek to maintain fellowship with Christ. We are not straitened in our God. He has made an abundant and all-sufficient provision for all our need; yea, given to us all things that pertain unto life and godliness: and the one secret of our barrenness and poverty is, because we are careless about receiving these wonderful supplies, and do not give ourselves time, nor take the trouble to get our spiritual necessities ministered to.

But to return to Stephen. At the close of his bold and faithful testimony for Christ we read, "He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." (Acts vii. 55, 56.)

What a mighty and convincing proof is this of the Lord Jesus' intense interest in and sympathy with His people's service for Him! He seems to have risen from His seat at the right hand of God (see Col. iii. 1), and shows Himself to His servant as standing, watching, listening, and delighting to hear him thus true and faithful; and apparently He thus continued to stand, encouraging, cheering, and strengthening His dying martyr, while the stones fell thick and fast upon his prostrate body.

Ah! was it not the sight of his beloved Lord that caused that glorious cry, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" and then again that deeply touching one,

“Lord, lay not this sin to their charge”? And as he uttered these words his spirit passed away to Him who stood above with open arms to welcome it. A glorious death indeed! So like his dying Lord’s, who prayed for His murderers, and commended His departing Spirit to His Father’s care. Stephen had learnt of Jesus: aye, more than that, He had received the very life of Christ; the Spirit of Christ was in him, and therefore the precious fruits which so adorned and crowned his blessed Lord were also in measure seen in this beloved disciple.

The next manifestation of the Lord Jesus was when Saul, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, was journeying to Damascus with the intention of searching out and destroying all who loved that blessed name. And as “he came near to Damascus, suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” And again, “I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.”

Wonderful exhibition of grace indeed!—unlocking the very heart of Christ, and revealing His deep and untold sympathy for His persecuted people. Those precious words—“Why persecutest thou me?”—how touchingly they tell that He is afflicted in all our afflictions, and speak of the yearnings of His holy soul over those who are suffering for His sake!

“Whate’er the bruised spirit grieves,
No light distress will Jesus deem;
There’s not a throb my bosom heaves,
But stirs a kindred pulse in Him.”

The sympathy of Jesus—oh, who can tell its depth and tenderness! How well He knows the way to soothe and calm the troubled soul. Yes, He can wipe the weeping eye, and chase the heavy sigh of grief away. He can sustain beneath affliction’s heaviest

blow, and cause the heart to sing while passing through the deepest woe.

And this Jesus is ours—our Beloved, and our Friend—the One who so loves us, that He desires to be our continual companion; who always delights to hear our voice, and asks to see our countenance. Oh for affections worthy of Him, and steadfastness of heart to keep company with Him!

Again we read in Acts xviii., when Paul was at Corinth, and greatly troubled because of the violent opposition and blasphemy of the enemies of the gospel, “Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.”

How tenderly He thus proved His watchful care over His servants, and assured them that no harm could happen to them without His permission. What confidence and courage this should give us in His service, and what a thorough determination it should produce in us to yield ourselves entirely to His word and will. “Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass? I am the Lord thy God and I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand.” What power such words should have; and how effectually they should destroy all fear of man or dread of consequences. The Lord give us more faith and confidence in what He Himself is.

We have another striking revelation of Christ in Acts xxiii. Paul was evidently depressed and disheartened as well as persecuted; and the blessed Jesus Himself, with the love and tenderness which marks His every act, came down into his dungeon in the middle of the night, and reassured and revived him with these precious words: “Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.”

Such is the risen, living Jesus: the same in all His ways of grace as when He trod this earth. Thus is He revealed to us, that He may win our hearts and bind them to Himself. May He give us grace to ponder on this revelation of what He is, that we may see Him, listen to Him, delight in Him, and reverently and lovingly worship at His feet, and yield ourselves, and all we have and are, a reasonable and acceptable sacrifice to Him.

THE PRESENT MINISTRY OF CHRIST.

REVELATION i.

WE have already glanced at a few of the revelations of the Lord Jesus as the risen and ascended Saviour, and have seen how apt and suited they are to attract and bind our affections to Him, and to lead us to delight and glory in His exceeding excellence. But in Rev. i. we have a still fuller and more marvellous manifestation of Him, as living and caring for His church in its passage through the wilderness.

He is there revealed to us as in the midst of seven golden candlesticks, considering and ministering to the requirement of each. The Spirit of God informs us that these seven golden candlesticks are the seven churches; and they appear to represent the universal church in its completeness and continuity, commencing from the day of Pentecost, when it was baptized by one Spirit into one body, and continuing until the day when the last living member will be added to it, and that "same Jesus" will descend from heaven to receive it unto Himself.

The Lord Jesus is presented to us as walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, and ministering to their varied need. As the high priest of old went into the tabernacle of God, and with the golden snuffers was accustomed to trim the seven golden lamps, removing the charred wick, and pouring in the fresh oil

that they might burn more brightly, so Jesus, our great High Priest, in His patient and amazing grace, is continually considering our need and anointing us with fresh oil, removing that which dims our light, and pouring of His own abundant fulness into our souls that we may glorify Him and reflect His image.

As Christ was the light of the world, the true and only light when He trod this earth, so now that He has passed again into the heavens, He says to those in whom He has kindled the light of life, "Ye are the light of the world," and exhorts them so to let their light shine before men that all may see their good works, and glorify their Father who is in heaven.

He knows how much there is to dim this light, and how the dust of earth comes in and chokes the oil, and therefore in His grace He waits, with firm yet gentle hand and loving heart, to clear away each clog, and so revive our souls that we may walk worthy of Him, and become a name, and praise, and glory to Him.

He manifests Himself to us in this glorious portion, in *priestly* raiment—"clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle." This girdle of service reminds us of the curious girdle of the ephod which was worn by the high priest (see Ex. xxviii. 26-29), and used to fasten the breastplate firmly in its place—that blessed breastplate on which the names of the tribes of Israel were graven, and which tells us how Jesus our great High Priest has graven our poor worthless names upon His heart; and *there* He bears us, in spite of all our wilfulness and sin, with deep unchanging love before His Father's throne.

Oh, what a friend is Christ to me!

His majesty and glory are also brought before us: "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow," thus calling for our adoring worship and praise.

In His tenderness and love He so stoops to our

necessities that He removes all fear and dread from our hearts, and makes us at ease and at home in His presence. Marvellous miracle of grace! Poor hell-deserving sinners enjoying the friendship of the living God! But we must not forget He is God, "greatly to be feared in the assembly of His saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about Him." We must seek to avoid all unhallowed familiarity with Him, and ever remember that He is our Lord and Master. He is the mighty God, the Ancient of Days, the One who claims our hearts' allegiance and worship; aye more, who binds us to Himself with such an adamant chain of love, that every pulse should throb with true adoring love to Him.

We then read: "His eyes are as a flame of fire;" and are reminded of those other words, "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." These eyes of flame are used to search us through and through; to read our every secret thought or wish; to probe the very bottom of our hearts; and why? That He may truly bless our souls by searching and rooting out the hidden canker—sin, which it may be we knew not was lurking there.

We need not dread these piercing eyes. They are the eyes of love. His thoughts concerning us are thoughts of peace, to do us good. He knows our desperate case, but He has healing medicine for it all. He sees our wounds, but He will bring us health and cure. Then let us court these eyes of flame, and bare our hearts, and say with one of old, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." These eyes are *for*, and not against us. He loves us so intensely that He has

pledged Himself to make us holy; and as our great High Priest He searches out our case, that He may meet it perfectly.

“And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace.” Yes, He will act in judgment, if His warnings are unheeded. He is the true and faithful God, and by Him actions are weighed. He is full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercy; but He will not spare the rod where He perceives that nothing else will gain His end.

He “gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works;” and if we do not judge ourselves, and cleanse ourselves from idols, those feet of burnished brass will tread the idols down. In very faithfulness He will turn His hand upon us, and purely purge away our dross, and take away all our tin. “If we will judge ourselves, we shall not be judged.” “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” But if we harden our hearts in indifference or pride, we shall have to prove that He is stronger than we are, and that “those who walk in pride He is able to abase.” He is the holy God, and holiness becomes His house for ever; and only as we follow after holiness can we have happy fellowship with Him.

“And He had in His right hand seven stars.” These seven stars, the Holy Ghost tells us, are “the angels of the seven churches,” and seem to present *all* the varied ministries which Christ in His abundant grace has provided for His church’s need.

All ministry is in His hand *alone*. A human heart and a human mouth may be used as the instrument to convey the truth, but all the power is of Him, the wisdom from Him. Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but unless they are used by God to sow the seed and water it while growing, their ministry will be valueless and ineffectual.

Apollos was a very eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures; but in the service of God his eloquence was utterly useless, except as he was empowered and filled with the Spirit. Paul was a man of wonderful erudition and wisdom, perhaps surpassed by none in mental power and learning; and yet, when contemplating the mighty work in which he was engaged, he says, "I am nothing."

"If any man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." The power is of God, and God alone; and He alone can give the increase. He uses the human heart and human lips, filling the heart out of His own fulness, and empowering the lips by the mighty working of His Holy Spirit, and using both to convey His truth to those who are prepared to receive it. The truth is all His; the power, the glory, all His; and He alone must have the praise and honour of it; and only as we depend upon and yield ourselves to His power and guidance, shall we become able ministers of the New Testament, and vessels fitted and meet for the Master's use.

This truth as to ministry is very important; for unless we recognize Christ as holding it all in His own hand, we shall make futile efforts of our own, and attempt to accomplish by human learning and human power that which can be alone wrought by the divine power of Christ Himself.

"And out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword." Such is the ministry of the truth when it proceeds direct from Christ Himself. His word is with power, and searches out the secret sin, and lays the axe at its root. It goes home to the heart, and commands us to depart from iniquity. It says "Thou art the man" to the carnal and slothful Christian, while it revives and strengthens the feeble soul.

It is a two-edged sword, and cuts *for* us as well as against us. If our hearts are cold and careless, and desirous of indulging sin, it cuts athwart our desires

and wishes, it pierces like an arrow, and is a solemn warning from the Lord, to which we do well to take heed. If, on the contrary, we are intent on pleasing Christ, and seeking to do His will, the same word cuts for us, siding with our longings and desires, helping us against the thoughts and feelings we hate, and strengthening us in the conflict we are waging with the world, the flesh, and the devil. It is a *sharp* sword, and if we fairly yield ourselves to its action, it will do its work speedily and effectually, and save us much of the suffering which half-heartedness inevitably produces.

“And His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength,” reviving, strengthening, cheering all: giving life, and light, and heat, and fruitfulness, yea, every blessing we can wish: shining both on the evil and the good, ministering joy and gladness to all who come beneath His beams.

Well do we know the healing power of those beams, and delight to bask in the light of His countenance. “Who will show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.” In His favour is life, and in His presence there is fulness of joy. “Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound: they will walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance.”

Thus *we see* JESUS. We see Him crowned with glory and honour. We see Him clothed with majesty and power; and we see Him using this glory and power for our blessing, and stooping in inimitable grace to consider and minister to all our need, and bear with all our waywardness and sin. Well may we worship and adore this wondrous One, and own with full, yea, overflowing, hearts that HE IS WORTHY! HE ALONE!

“Worthy to sit enthroned above,
Worthy of all our praise and love,
Worthy for evermore to reign,
Worthy the Lamb that once was slain!”

PISGAH; OR, FAITH'S VISION.

THE top of Pisgah has ever been hallowed with many of the happiest thoughts of the family of God.

It has not been in vain that God has given us that mysterious record of the revelation made to the man of God who died not as men die, for "his bodily strength was not abated, neither was his eye dim," and who was not followed to the grave with the tears and laments of a nation to whom he had been a nursing father and whose shortcomings and failings had filled his cup with sorrow.

Michael guarded the body from which in full life and vigour the spirit had departed. The devil sought to frustrate the purpose of God as Michael and his hosts performed the funeral rites and carried the body of the man of God from the top of Mount Nebo and buried it in the plain below, "in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor," where, unknown to this day, save to God and to the angels, the sepulchre remains.

In all this there is something so marvellous, so full of mystery, that one might almost fear to draw an analogy between Moses on the mountain top and his experiences there, and the Christian and his experiences in the ordinary every-day walks of life. But as the miraculous conversion of Paul and his entry into the divine life is given as a pattern to those who should hereafter believe (1 Tim. i. 16), so the last revelation of God to His faithful servant Moses is placed as a record for us, that our faith may behold what his eyes saw.

Saving faith has its stages; there is the *hearing* of faith, and the *seeing* of faith. In all human testimony there is that of the ear and that of the eye, and so is it in the testimony of God presented to our faith.

When Moses crossed the Red Sea, he sang of the land in that glorious song of triumph which we have

recorded in **Ex. xv.** He sang of God's "holy habitation," of "the mountain of His inheritance," which He had made for Himself to dwell in. Again, in **Ex. xxiii.**, God renewed from Mount Sinai the promise of the land "that flowed with milk and honey." Still the revelation was made to the *ear*, and this is ever the experience of the wilderness. But when Arnon has been passed and Nebo reached, the land is presented to the *eye*, and thus the more distant hearing of the ear of faith gives place to the nearer seeing of the eye of faith—for still faith is in exercise: the land is not yet in possession.

The character of Moses' communion with God in the wilderness was exceptional; it was pre-eminently a "face-to-face" and a "mouth-to-mouth" communion (**Num. xii. 8**), and prepared the way for the visions of Pisgah, when with undimmed eye and unabated strength he ascended that holy hill alone with God.

It is hard to realize the scene, and harder still to enter into the antitype, when to the eye of the believer the heavenly kingdom is so seen and the nearness of God so felt that, like Paul, when he was caught up into the third heaven and saw such visions and heard such things that mortal lips could not utter, he is constrained to say, "Whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell; God knoweth."

In the annals of many who have fallen asleep in Jesus, especially connected with their dying hours, are recorded such ineffable manifestations and communications from God that some have had to beseech the Lord to withhold a further display of His glory, as frail humanity could bear no more. Such death-bed realizations are unspeakably precious, sending back, as it were, Pisgah glories to encourage the faith of those who still remain in the conflict. But while perhaps such revelations are mostly vouchsafed to the departing saint, is it not true that the Spirit of God has been

sent as the present revealer, as well as the present earnest of those coming glories that God has presented to our faith in the Word?

In the Gospel of John our Lord tells us that one of the objects of the Spirit's presence is not only to "guide into all truth," but "to shew things to come." That which the eye of man hath not seen nor his ear heard, the things that are freely given unto us of God, He hath revealed unto us by His Spirit. Hence we gather that Pisgah revelations of the glories of the land of promise should assuredly be the sought-for privilege of the child of faith who, having passed through the experience of the wilderness, has reached that place, where he is prepared for such manifestations as God is ever prepared to give to those able to receive them. If we have learned our place of strangership on earth, we are then prepared to be led into the enjoyment and realizations of being no stranger *there*, no alien in that better land of which even now we are citizens.

The names of Nebo and Pisgah are beautifully significant of the thoughts thus occupying our minds. Nebo signifies *prophetic revelation*, and Pisgah means *exploration*. The latter word in the Hebrew is used only as a verb in one place in the Scriptures, and that is in Ps. xlviii. 12, in the sentence "*Consider her palaces*" — *i.e.* explore them.

The connexion of this psalm with the scene we are contemplating on Pisgah is full of instruction; for as Moses is taken up into the mount to explore the land, so are those to whom this psalm is addressed commanded to make themselves acquainted with the city of their God, the mountain of His holiness, the joy of the whole earth: "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider (or *explore*) her palaces." They were not to be satisfied with a hearsay account of their city, but as citizens to explore her walls, her bulwarks, and her palaces.

These things are not written for Israel only, but for us also, that, not content with a far-off hearing of these things that are given to us of God, our hearts may never be satisfied till the far-off becomes near, and the testimony of the ear gives place to the witness of the eye, and we are able to say, "I have seen 'the King in His beauty,' I have beheld "the land that is very far off."

Of this Paul speaks when he says, "*We see Jesus;*" and seeing Him crowned with glory and honour as the apostles did on the holy mount, we are enabled like Moses to "endure" because we *see* Him who is invisible. Israel *heard* Him, but Moses *saw* Him, and hence the contrast between his experience and theirs. The promise is that the pure in heart shall "see God," and the measure of the purity may be the measure of the vision.

It was this that made the difference between Paul and the Corinthians to whom he wrote, so that while the latter were reigning as kings in their enjoyment of earth's citizenship, Paul was *looking* not at the things that were seen, but at the things that were not seen.

But if Moses had his Pisgah, the Son of man had His, and of this we have one recorded instance, when a few months before His passion He went up into the mount, where, surrounded by the glories of the kingdom, He was transfigured before His disciples. Yet not before them all. Peter, and James, and John alone were there, for they alone were able in any measure to appreciate and understand what it signified.

This illustrates an important principle which our Lord lays down when, shortly after, being asked to place the sons of Zebedee on His right and left hand, He replied, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of? Are ye able to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" For *such* is this place prepared of the Father. It is prepared for those who are prepared for it, and is not an arbitrary appoint-

ment by God without regard to the condition of the receiver.

The transfiguration occupies a remarkable place in the Gospel history. It would seem as if it were given in earnest to the Son of man of that glory which He was going to secure by His death and sufferings. It was a foretaste of the future, but while it was so in all its outward manifestations, what Moses and Elias talked with Him about, was not the glory, but "His decease, which He was to accomplish in Jerusalem."

So too, while Moses on Nebo was contemplating the land of promise, his own decease was present to his mind, and in this he became a remarkable type of the Lord, when on Israel's account he was prevented from entering into the land. Like Jonah, he was a type of a dying Christ; for as after his death Israel crossed the Jordan dryshod, so Christ passed under the waves and billows of God, that those who follow Him should pass beyond death and judgment, and enter into eternal life, the heirs of an inheritance incorruptible and unfading, reserved in heaven.

It is important to connect the transfiguration with that which precedes it in all the gospels, and that is the announcement by the Lord for the first time of His death, followed by those words of universal application which He addressed "to them all." "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." The pathway of the Lord becomes that of the disciple.

The connexion between this announcement and the transfiguration reveals the same truth that we have been already speaking of, that in order to be able to see the glory of the holy mount we must be prepared by the self-denial and the cross that lies in the pathway.

Thus it has ever been, as we see in Gen. xxii., where it is said that Jehovah-jireh *is to be seen* in the mount of the Lord *unto this day*. Abraham saw the glory there, but Isaac had been laid on the altar first. He

had denied himself; he had taken up the cross; he had followed on, and did not stop till the vision of the glory came and turned his sorrow into joy. Alas! how often are visions of the glory missed simply because the path of obedience and self-renunciation has been forsaken.

But if Pisgah is connected in spirit with the mount of transfiguration, and the coming and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, we may thence be led to that great and high mountain from which John was shown the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, when he explored her palaces, her streets, her river, her light, her throne. (Rev. xxi.)

John was taken away in spirit, and saw all this glory: and so must it be with ourselves; and until a revelation by the Spirit of God is thus made to our hearts, we may read of them and ponder over the description, but it is a lifeless picture that conveys nothing to the heart. We need to become *eye-witnesses* of His glory, and then, and not till then, will it exercise a living power over us.

Mount Pisgah, the mount of transfiguration, the mount of John's celestial vision, and other similar scenes in Scripture seem connected together in the mind of the Apostle Peter in his second epistle, when contemplating his own decease, of which his Master had forewarned him. He therefore stirs up those to whom he wrote, to give diligence to make their calling and election sure, that so an entrance might be ministered unto them abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour. He also seeks to bring the power of these truths to bear upon their present condition, as still walking in the "dark place" of sin's defilement and of Satan's power and malice, and speaks of the prophetic word as that whereunto they do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise *in their hearts*.

It is important to ponder over these words "in your hearts," because it points to the fact that the day may dawn and the day-star arise *there* long before it dawns upon the world at large.

Does not this give us a perception of what God designs the future glory to be to us? It should not be a dim and distant object in the future so much as a bright and living joy in the present, while walking along in the dark and dreary places of this earth; and the mount of transfiguration should become to our mighty faith a reality, so that we might say with Peter, "we were *eye-witnesses* of His Majesty." And what is this but entering into the realization of that which God gave us when, having quickened, He raised us up together in Christ, and made us sit in heavenly places with Him?

Alas! what strangers are we for the most part to these heavenly places! No sooner does the fig tree cease to blossom, the vine and olive tree to bear fruit, and the brightness and beauty of the present begin to fade, than our joy begins to ebb, the hands to hang down, and the knees to wax feeble. It would be otherwise if Habakkuk's visions were a reality to us. Then in the sublime language of inspiration we should be able to say still, though all be gone, God remains, and therefore "I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation," and "He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon *my* high places."

What blessed faith, when all is lost, to be able to speak of "*my* high places." This is faith's prerogative, and it might be the portion of every one who believes in the Son of God, if, knowing, he would follow on to know the Lord; for "His going forth is prepared as the morning."

The testimony of God's word is full of the highest and most precious glimpses given to faith of a present day-dawn and of a rising day-star, to be seen now by

those who keep the things of God always in remembrance. But those Pisgah glimpses are, alas! so rare, so few and far between, in the general experience of the Church of God, that, when realized, it is as strange as if they had no warrant in His word.

We need to lay hold of and rejoice in those things which we most assuredly believe, so that we may be able to say, "*I know*" as well as "*I believe.*" The Lord not only desires us to be believing servants, but He would make us *friends* who *know* (John xv. 15), of whom it might be said, as of Moses, that "the Lord spake unto him face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend."

While the eye of man hath not seen, nor the ear of man heard, nor the heart of man imagined what God has prepared for them that love Him, they are not beyond the ear, and eye, and heart of faith, but *are* revealed unto us by the Spirit of God.

Let us, then, press forward till the eye of our faith has been opened to see, and thereby to bring near to our hearts those things which are graciously revealed to those who can stand with Abraham on "the mount of God," with Moses on the top of Pisgah, with Peter on the mount of transfiguration, and with John on the high mountain. Well may we say with one of old, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Amen.

GROANING IN HOPE.

ROM. viii. 15-23.

FOR ye, brethren, beloved of God, have not received the spirit of bondage, of slavery, that you should revert to your former state of fear and dread of God; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, of sonship; ye have been "made partakers of the divine nature," whereby we cry, Abba, Father. And now, lest we should be left in doubt of the change having

taken place, "the Spirit itself beareth joint-witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." The Spirit itself can bear witness *to* the work of His own creation, and can bear witness *with* the new spirit thereof, our individual, renewed spirits.

Ye were dead in sins. Until ye were born again of God, the Spirit had no kindred spirit to co-witness with; but now ye have a spirit that can understand all things; and what your natural hearts could not receive or discern, your renewed spirits can; and ye have the joyful inner testimony of the Holy Ghost bearing corroborative witness with your own, that ye are the children of God. He has taken of the things of Christ and revealed them unto you, and led you into the truth of God's wondrous redemption in Christ; so that instead of being the servants of sin, which you once were, ye are become God's dear children. This is no idea or fancy, but has been absolutely and distinctly wrought in you through the mighty power of the word of God; and now those precious words are true of you, "Ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord almighty."

"And *since* children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," whom God hath made heir of all things, and who hath by inheritance obtained such an excellent name. Ye are participators with Christ of suffering here, and of glory hereafter; for ye cannot have the suffering ye are undergoing for His sake without the glory. "If we suffer, we shall also reign:" therefore be comforted concerning your present tribulations. And further, "I reckon," says the apostle Paul, carefully weighing the matter, that our sufferings now "are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us;" for when Christ, who is our life, "shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." He shall then be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe.

See then your prospects; and know this, that for this glorious manifestation the whole creation is in earnest waiting. Little does it know what is to come, or how its deliverance is to be effected; it was made subject to frailty, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who made it all subject in hope of better things to come, and knowing better days would come. There will soon be a time when even the creation itself shall be set free from its present bondage of corruption, and brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. When the jubilee arrives for God's children, their liberty of glory, then creation, which fell with man, shall be restored with redeemed man, and shall joy in the liberty of the glory brought about by the second Man, the Lord from heaven.

"For we know that the whole creation," animate and inanimate, "groaneth and travaileth together in pain even until now;" not knowing why, yet restless in its longings for deliverance from its present state. "And not only so, but even we ourselves groan within ourselves," though we have the first-fruits of the Spirit. We have still this body of death about us; and though we can intelligently apprehend why we groan, and know our deliverance is at hand, yet we groan, longing for the end, for the fruition of our adoption, of our salvation, even the final redemption of the body. We groan for the time when "He shall appear, and we shall be *like Him*; for we shall see Him as He is." Soon shall our hope be realized; soon shall He come! Amen.

We go with the redeemed, to taste
 Of joy supreme that never dies;
 Our feet still press the weary waste,
 Our hearts, our home are in the skies.

And oh! while on to Zion's hill
 The toilsome path of life we tread,
 Around us, loving Father, still
 Thy circling wings of mercy spread.

LEVI; OR, GRACE REIGNING.

IN looking at the history of the tribe of Levi, the child of God, taught by His Spirit, is struck with many precious examples of the way in which God deals with men, and in it will be found much typical teaching for the present instruction and edification of the church of God. Indeed it is a field over which we may glean time after time, and from which we may gather rich harvests of spiritual food, and yet leave it unexhausted and inexhaustible. Of this, as of every portion of the Word of God, we are constrained to say, "The well is deep," and we cannot fathom it.

In the first place we see that blessed cardinal truth which meets us in every part of the word, and at every point of God's dealings with fallen man—mercy rejoicing against judgment, grace reigning through righteousness. This is the base on which the whole structure rests—the key-stone of the arch; for in no other way can God make Himself known to us in salvation, and in no other way can any sinner be saved than on the ground of grace reigning through righteousness.

The first mention we have of Levi, after the account of his birth, is his share with his brother Simeon in the treacherous murder of the Shechemites. This sin brought upon him the judgment of God as pronounced by his father Jacob, when blessing his sons just previous to his departure. The solemn sentence of righteous retribution was, "Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." Thus we have the just consequences of his sin visited upon his head; he had no portion allotted to him as his possession as did the other tribes, but was scattered through the whole land.

Now grace is seen to triumph. Righteousness in the person of Jacob pronounced the curse; but grace

in the person of Moses, the king of Jeshurun, announces the surpassing blessing which God has in store for this same tribe. (Deut. xxxiii. 8-11.) Levi, the justly scattered one, is graciously chosen to the peculiar privilege of serving God in the office of the priesthood and the holy service of the tabernacle, standing between Him and the other tribes as His mouthpiece and minister. Thus the very judgment that fell upon him on account of sin was taken advantage of in the sovereign grace of Jehovah, and made to turn out a blessing both to himself and his brethren; for through being scattered, he was more effectually enabled to fulfil the commission entrusted to him by God,—viz, “They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law.”

Now all this is precious full of teaching, and beautifully illustrates the manner of God’s love toward us. “Where sin abounded, grace hath much more abounded.” Levi, scattered and cursed, is just a picture of what we once were. “Far off,” “dead in trespasses and sins,” “condemned already,” is the scripture testimony concerning those who do not believe. And we gladly acknowledge to the glory and praise of God that what He says is true, and taking our place where His truth puts us, we rejoice in the *knowledge* that His grace has changed the *far off* condition to that of *nearness* by the blood of Jesus Christ.

But while thus rejoicing in the blessed truth of His grace far surpassing our sin, and oftentimes even making our very backslidings to reprove and teach us, let us not forget that sin always brings its punishment. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap,” is true of the believer, as well as of the unconverted man. If we sow to the flesh, we shall most assuredly reap corruption and suffer loss. God does indeed come in His compassion and grace, and overrule all to our good, yet this does not alter the solemn fact that every seed of evil that is sown by us must of necessity bring forth its own fruit.

We have many instances in scripture in confirmation of this. Levi, whose history we are considering, must always have remembered that his scattering was the result of sin, although overruled to blessing. David, although restored by God to the joys of His salvation, never during his life ceased to feel keenly the results of his sin. Peter also never forgot his denial of Jesus, although our blessed Lord used this as an occasion of special prayer on his behalf, and as the means of teaching him his utter weakness, thus preparing him by his very fall to be the bold unflinching champion of the cross that he afterwards became.

But mark, beloved, that grace reigns *through righteousness*. It is on a perfectly righteous ground that the grace of God meets us. Grace is not manifested in a lax and imperfect manner independently of justice; no, it is because justice has been satisfied, and all its claims fully and for ever vindicated, that the grace of God can flow forth unhinderedly to the poor bond-slave of sin and Satan. And here let us call to remembrance the way in which the claims of justice were met. "He hath made HIM to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Oh, think of the love that led HIM to take our place, to bear our stripes, to pay our debt! Think of the waves and billows that rolled over His blessed head, when He cried upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And all for our sakes, beloved; oh, what love! Well may our souls worship and adore Him, who so loved us as to give Himself for us, a ransom to save us from the pit of hell.

This truth of grace reigning through righteousness is exemplified in the case of Levi. He was brought into blessing in a righteous way—by virtue of the blood of the paschal lamb. When God redeemed Israel out of Egypt, He claimed all the first-born as His own; for since He saved Israel in free grace, and not because

they were better than Egyptians, the first-born whose lives were justly forfeited were declared to be His portion; but He chose the tribe of Levi as His own possession instead of the first-born. (See Numbers viii. 16-18.) Thus we see that Levi, being taken as substitute for the first-born whose lives were devoted to Jehovah, was rightfully His property.

And, oh, how much more true it is of us, who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, that we are the Lord's. He has bought us with the price of His own Son; and as He gave the Levites to Aaron the high priest to minister with Him in the service of the tabernacle, so has He given us to Christ, to serve Him here as His spiritual Levites for a little while, and hereafter to serve Him for ever in His heavenly temple.

Beloved in the Lord, what a wondrous and blessed place hath the Lord brought us into. Not only *made nigh*, but claimed by Jehovah as *His own*, and then *given by Him to the Lord Jesus*, to be "*joined*" with Him in priestly service as the Levites were "*joined*" to Aaron. (Such is the meaning of the name of this tribe; Genesis xxix. 34.) What can we say in the contemplation of such glorious privilege, but echo the words of the apostle, "Glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor. vi. 20.)

The next point we will notice is one of great practical importance to us in our walk and service. After the Levites were brought near, they had to be *cleansed*. (Numb. viii. 5.) This cleansing took place *after* the bringing near, and *before* the setting apart for service. So with believers now; the one offering of Christ makes us once and for ever nigh and perfectly meet, as far as our standing before God is concerned, for the inheritance of the saints in light; yet there is the need, and this cannot be set before our souls too prominently, of present practical holiness, of present cleansing from all defilement, before we are fitted for the service of

our heavenly Master. We must be purged, cleansed vessels before we are meet for Him to use. "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord."

He can do without our service entirely, and it is in love and grace that He permits us to be workers together with Him in the accomplishment of His purposes; but it is only as we are, in some measure at least, following in the footsteps of Jesus that He can take us up and give us this joy. And as we reflect on the privilege of being thus permitted to serve Him, should we not seek to be such vessels as He can use,—"vessels unto honour and meet for the Master's use?"

Then, after thus being cleansed, the Levites were consecrated or set apart for service, and waved as an offering before Jehovah by the whole nation of Israel. So should those who are *true Levites* now be set apart, and offer themselves to serve the Lord and His people.

And what shall we say of His service who has made us His own? It is perfect freedom in contrast to the bondage of sin; it is unalloyed joy in contrast to the wretchedness of the votaries of sin and Satan, and its end everlasting life in blessed and enduring contrast to that which the devil gives to those who serve and follow him—death. May the Lord give us, both writer and reader, to value more the service of our divine Master, and to esteem it to be indeed a privilege to be *joined* to Him during the little while of His absence, waiting for His return, when He will give to those who are faithful even in that which is least—the word of reward, "Well done!"

Let us remember that the practical carrying out of our service is dependent upon our subjection to our Head, and that it is varied "according as God hath dealt to every man." The whole tribe of Levi was subject to the High Priest; and to each family and individual his own work was appointed. The Kohathites had the charge of the holy vessels and their coverings; the Gershonites the tabernacle coverings and

hangings; and the Merarites the boards, pillars, and sockets of the tabernacle. So in the church of God now, there are different gifts and ministries bestowed and appointed by the Head, to be used in subjection to Him for the mutual edification of the body. It is well for each believer to seek to know his place—his line of service, and then seek grace and power from on high to fulfil it.

Confusion would have resulted in the camp of Israel from a Merarite wanting to do the work of a Kohathite and neglecting his own; so has much confusion arisen in the church from the restlessness of the flesh, and the unwillingness to take the place the Lord has given. What we need is wisdom to know our place, and grace to keep in it; and if each member did this, the whole body would work well together. But, alas! such has not been the case; the foot has sought to do the work of the hand, and the eye has refused to perform its own functions, because it could not do the duty of the ear, and thus the body has become disjointed, and much dishonour has been brought upon the Head, and much sorrow and discord upon the members.

But what is the remedy for all this? Individual dependence upon the Head, daily looking to Him, and in humility and meekness seeking to fulfil what He reveals to be His will. And let us remember, as we look upon the ruin that is around, that *soon* He will return, and then His church will be presented faultless before the Father's presence with exceeding joy, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Oh the grace that will accomplish such a result, and that bears so long with us in our waywardness down here!

There is one more point we would notice in the history of the tribe of Levi—*rest after service*. In 1 Chron. xxiii. 25, 26 we read, "David said, The Lord God of Israel hath given rest unto His people, that they may dwell in Jerusalem for ever, and also

unto the Levites; they shall no more carry the tabernacle, nor any vessels of it for the service thereof." In the preceding chapter we read of David's great preparations for the building of the temple, and his charge to Solomon his son concerning it; and in the prospect of his peaceful reign, when the temple should succeed the tabernacle, he spake of *rest* and *continuance*. The Levites from this time rested from their service connected with the tabernacle; for that had passed away; and now their future occupation was to be praise in the temple.

So will it be with us ere long. The real Prince of Peace will soon return to establish His kingdom, and then will cease our service in this lower scene—of which carrying the tabernacle and its vessels is a type, and that which is enduring will succeed—eternal praises in His heavenly temple.

THE NEW SONG.

HARK! a sound of wondrous feeling
Forth from heaven's gates is pealing,
Strange, unheard of song revealing.

Voice of multitude in number,
Of waters many roused from slumber,
Majestic as the God-sent thunder.

One the host which there rejoices,
One that song of many voices,
One their theme of themes the choicest.

Now at length redemption's story,
Planned from ages old and hoary,
Echoeth forth in wondrous glory.

Not a heart dissentient beating;
Each to each His praise repeating:
Wondrous subject! wondrous meeting!

Clouds of earth passed by for ever;
Gone life's tumult, fret, and fever;
Come at last God's presence ever.

Alleluia! Sweet the chorus!
Christ hath won the victory for us!
Omnipotent He reigneth o'er us!

SATISFIED WITH CHRIST.

THE Apostle Paul is presented to us in the word of God as a pattern saint, and seems to stand pre-eminent among all the servants the Lord Jesus has ever had upon this earth. His devoted service, his continued labours, his fervent love, his earnest zeal, his patient grace, his deep humility, have surely been surpassed by none. His sufferings also peculiarly abounded. What persecutions he endured, what shameful treatment from the hands of the world, what base ingratitude from the saints of God, what traducing and maligning from those who ought to have loved and honoured him.

Still none of these things moved him. His face was set like a flint. He had drunk into the spirit of Christ, and he was intent upon serving and pleasing Him. Not only was his *mind* filled and occupied with the truth of God, but he had a *heart* for Christ, and perhaps more nearly fulfilled that precept than any one else (except indeed the Lord Jesus Christ Himself)—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.”

Now what was the secret of the apostle's faithfulness? and why is it that we come so far below him in our zeal and obedience? He was a man of like passions with ourselves, he had to contend with the same evil nature as we have, fightings without and fears within; and what is there to hinder us from attaining the same measure of devotedness as he did?

We naturally shrink from measuring ourselves with the Lord Jesus. Though we thankfully own that He has left us an example that we should follow His steps, and rejoice to know that we are predestined to be conformed to His image, and are fully assured that what He has promised He is able and willing also to

perform, yet we feel that we cannot attain to His infinite holiness while in these bodies of sin and death. He had no sin within to struggle against, no innate iniquity continually cropping up. He was the holy, spotless, harmless, Lamb of God, whose every thought was pure, and every feeling intensely holy.

But in Paul we have a man like ourselves; a man with an evil heart of unbelief, and sin indigenious to his nature; and why should we not serve and follow Christ as he did?

Can we say that Christ was more necessary to Paul than to us, and that this gave him more stedfastness of heart? or that there were richer supplies of grace provided for him than for us? Was he loved with a greater love than we are? or was the Holy Ghost more ready to take of the things of Christ and reveal them to him, or more willing to minister to his need than He is to minister to us?

To all these questions we must answer *no*. We dare not assert, with the Scriptures in our hands, that there is less love, or less grace, or less provision for us in every way, than there was for him. "The grace of our God is exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus;" and the Spirit of God in His unwearied love is ever ready and waiting to bless and enrich our souls.

Why, then, are *we* so poor and feeble? Oh, is it not because our eye is not single, and our heart is not engrossed with Christ? We want something for ourselves instead of everything for Christ, and this produces an uneven and wavering walk.

We read of some who should arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. These were evidently real believers, for they are distinguished from the grievous wolves who should enter in, not sparing the flock, and are specified as being "of your own selves;" and what was the secret of their failure? Was it not because their hearts were not satisfied with

Christ, and therefore they wanted something for themselves? A name among men, a place in the church, the admiration of their fellow-disciples.

Not so with Paul. Christ was his all in all; his love was firmly set on Him, his affections twined around Him, and he wanted everything for Christ, and nothing for himself. This nerved and sustained him in his path of self-sacrificing love. This gave him power to go on serving and caring for those who only gave him hatred for his love. This kept him from turning aside because of the afflictions that came upon him; and this kept him steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Our hearts glow as we listen to his words of holy determination, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

He had received a special ministry from the Lord Jesus, and his heart was set on fulfilling it: and have not *we* received the same? Not the peculiar service that was committed to Paul, but has not the Lord Jesus committed to each of us a special ministry, a special sphere of service for Him which He would love to see us faithfully fulfilling?

Paul writes to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received of the Lord, that thou fulfil it." The kind of ministry is not mentioned, but it would not seem to have been a very prominent one. He is only named twice in the word of God, once in the passage already quoted, and again in Philemon, where he is styled our fellow-soldier. And are not we also fellow-soldiers, called to fight the good fight of faith, and to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil? Does not the Lord say to each of us, "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received of Me, that thou fulfil it?"

Our service may greatly vary, but will anyone dare to say, 'the Lord has not given *me* anything to do for Him?' If our service be in the kitchen, let us serve Him faithfully there; if in the workshop, let us seek there to glorify Him; if behind the counter, still there we may represent Him; nor is there any lawful position in life where we may not show forth His virtues. We are His witnesses, left here to testify for Him, and to show forth His praises in all our ways, and words, and acts.

Oh, for hearts to be satisfied with Christ! intently, continually, occupied with Him! Thus shall we be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, and shall prove that we have a goodly heritage, and that the lines are fallen to us in pleasant places.

PURPOSE OF HEART.

ACTS xi. 23; PSALM xxvii. 4.

WHEN the soul of the sinner has been awakened from its state of death by the mighty voice of God, and made to feel its wretchedness and vileness in His sight, it becomes sensible that, unless grace and mercy are extended towards it, it *must* perish everlastingly. What is the anguish with which it then cries to God, "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great!" How will it seek to know the meaning of "God *so loved* the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," until at length the veil is withdrawn, and God the Holy Ghost reveals JESUS the Saviour of sinners?

What joy then displaces the sorrow! The one once *dead* now breathes the breath of life. He "honours the Son," believes on "Him who sent Him," *is* passed from *death* unto *life*," and "hath everlasting life." All things are now changed. He is "in Christ a new

creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The "light" which has been hitherto shunned is now sought unto, and communion—holy communion with God results. (1 John i. 7.)

For a while the power of the joy thus revealed by "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," as liberating from Satan's thralldom, will carry the soul onward over every difficulty; and the wilderness into which grace has brought it is but little seen. Israel, in the knowledge of their deliverance from Egypt's bondage, could sing that mighty song of faith recorded in Exodus xv., and reach onward over *every* intervening obstacle, even unto the very rest and sanctuary of God, to which He had appointed they should come. (Read carefully Exodus xv. 13-17.) But, though *faith* could say this, they were not yet *actually* there. The wilderness had to be traversed, and they had to learn the sustaining power of the mighty God who had brought them into it.

The wilderness did not become such to Israel because of their *feeling* the roughness of the way; the thorns and briars were there before they entered it. It had ever been a wilderness; but it became so to them because they had been redeemed and brought out from Egyptian bondage *by the blood of God's paschal lamb*. During the first three days' journey over its barren wastes this filled their hearts; and because of what God had done, they could rejoice in full faith as to the "habitation" to which they were going, and thought not of the road they were travelling.

The bitter waters of Marah are now reached, and they tell the tale that Israel had not left the flesh behind; but they also tell us of the One who had passed that way before—their Redeemer. He knew whom He had redeemed. He knew that the flesh would travel out from Egypt with them, and prepared that tree which when cast into the bitter water should

not only calm the risings of the flesh, but should make even the bitter water of the wilderness "sweet."

The parallel to all this will readily be drawn by every heart that knows the value of the "precious blood of Christ;" and let none forget that it is *His cross*, His blessed cross, that has constituted this world a wilderness to us. We are not yet *actually* with Him in the glory, though faith says "He *hath* raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," and looks forward to "His glory," "His habitation" "*with Jesus*," as the *rest* in store for us. (John vi. 39; xiv. 3; xvii. 24.)

Let us then, between the cross and the glory, seek to walk the wilderness *with Jesus*, and in all the vicissitudes of the way put the hand at once upon the flesh, seeing that "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." Let us give it no place, but into *every trial* bring that blessed One—that One who, like the tree in the wilderness, has been here *before* us, has been "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin," and who is now a "High Priest that is touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and "able to succour them that are tempted." *Every* sorrow by the way, especially such as may arise for His sake through following Him, will then, like Marah's bitter waters, become not only drinkable, bearable, but "sweet."

Happy would it have been for Israel had they "with purpose of heart" cleaved "unto the Lord." But, alas! they distrusted their God, murmured against Him, and "in their hearts turned back again unto Egypt." "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

"He that endureth unto *the end* shall be saved;" and the rendering of "eternal life" to such as by "*patient* continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honour, and immortality," is a principle enunciated by our God, to

which it is well that we take heed. The first joy, the "first love," ought never to wane; and indeed does not when the soul proceeds on its heavenward course according to God. But how frequently is the failure of the *individual* Christian like unto the failure of the *nation* of Israel. Difficulties present themselves, the flesh resents, and murmuring and distrust result.

Caleb, however, "followed the Lord fully." He had "purpose of heart," and did not content himself with anything short of an onward course; and he was rewarded with "Hebron for an inheritance." (Josh. xiv. 14.) The apostle Paul often alludes to his determination to press onward. "I *press toward* the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." "I therefore *so run*, not as uncertainly; *so fight* I, not as one that beateth the air; but I *keep under* my body, and bring it into subjection," "*bringing into captivity* every thought to the obedience of Christ." He also exhorts Timothy to "*be strong* in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," and to "*endure hardness* as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

Barnabas too, without alarming the Christians at Antioch about the readiness of man to turn back, yet full well knowing the wiles and power of the adversary, "exhorted them all, that *with purpose of heart* they would cleave unto the Lord." Again at Antioch, in Pisidia, when the Jews would not receive the apostle's word, but "went out of the synagogue," Paul and Barnabas "persuaded" those who had received it to "*continue* in the grace of God;" and on their return journey to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, they "confirmed the souls of the disciples, and exhorted them to continue in the faith," telling them "that we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God."

The apostle Paul himself is a bright example of persevering faithfulness. He tells us that "when it pleased God to reveal His Son in" him, that he "conferred not with flesh and blood" as to *the way* he was

to preach the Son of God among the heathen, but "determined to know nothing among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

So may it be still with every blood-bought child of God. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that *loveth* me," are the blessed words of the Lord Jesus; and then He supplements them, "And he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him:" "If a man *love* me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and *make our abode* with him." A blessed result this, and a blessed reward for any little measure of "purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord."

The conflict with Satan will, however, be just in proportion to the determination to "*please* Him who hath chosen us to be His soldiers." When nearing the goal, at the end of the race, the apostle tells us, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." He *knew* that he had *pleased* his Lord and master, that he had had "purpose of heart" in his career, and therefore could say, in the very presence of Him to whom he had sought to show his love by following Him in His rejection, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

There is something so sweet and touching in hearing this aged servant thus speak out with conscious power, that the heart involuntarily breathes its prayer to Jesus to enable us to follow him in his rejection by the world; and then we need to listen with quickness of ear to the apostle's clear, ringing note of exhortation: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life."

I would gladly close our meditation here, but a note of warning must have its place also. The precious

Lord Jesus, when on earth, met with those who could not bear His words, who said, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" and who eventually "went back, and walked no more with Him." After He had ascended into His glory, we find a Demas joining with others in Christian salutations and greeting by the apostle's hand; but of whom that aged, honoured servant is afterwards obliged to say that he had *forsaken* him. He speaks so touchingly, feelingly—for he was but man like the rest of us—of the loneliness of his position, and begs Timothy to be diligent in coming shortly; "for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved the present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica." Others who were his fellow-labourers had been called away by various circumstances, and he was left alone to finish his course. His grief at Demas' turning away from the Lord he does not tell us of; he only notices his want of "purpose of heart," and leaves for us a sad warning lest love for "this present world" should lead any to depart from the strait and narrow way which "leadeth unto life."

May our gracious, precious Lord Jesus give to each and all that "purpose of heart" which shall lead us to press toward the mark for the prize of His high calling, delivering us from every evil work, and preserving us unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

"FOR ME AND THEE."

MATT. xvii. 27.

HE who was rich and for our sakes "became poor," and in His poverty shared the tribute money with Peter, saying, "That take, and give unto them for Me and thee," surely still speaks those gracious words to us from His eternal glory—"for Me *and thee*." Soon shall we share all the riches of His glory according to

His promise, "the glory which Thou gavest Me *I have given them.*"

Now is our time of poverty; this wilderness affords us *nothing*; but is He not mindful of our need? Does He not seek through our very helplessness and insufficiency to make us better *understand* the meaning of these blessed words—"for Me and thee?"

GATHERING UNTO JESUS.

"WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED TOGETHER IN MY NAME, THERE AM I IN THE MIDST OF THEM."

SINCE many valued friends enquire,

What is the object of desire?

Why make ye this ado and fuss,

And wherefore go ye not with us?

In meekness would I now reply,
And try to tell the reason why,
The blessed privilege we claim
Of meeting in the Saviour's name.

From forms and party spirit free,

We wish in all simplicity

To pray and praise, and hear the word,

And seek the blessing of the Lord.

The early Christians sought the shade

When they their supplications made;

The upper chamber was the place

Resorted to for means of grace.

The world admires some splendid pile,

And seeks in vain to reconcile

The lowly doctrines of the Cross

With outward pomp and empty dross.

But willing now our cross to take,

And leave the world for Jesus' sake,

We love to tread the path He trod,

Obedient to the will of God.

The mountain was His place of prayer;

He taught His Church while standing there;

'Twas not amidst the crowd He taught

The happy men His blood had bought.

When Jesus would great truths unfold,

Unto the world they ne'er were told;

To show the secrets of His heart,

He led His own dear flock apart;

And said, To you alone 'tis given
 To know the mysteries of heaven.
 Some whom He sent His Church to teach
 Were "ignorant" and rude of speech.

They were not taught in Grecian schools,
 But in the world's esteem were fools;
 And yet their words were clothed with power,
 And gathered converts every hour.

Shall custom teach us to approve
 Men destitute of Jesus' love,
 Such as the sacred office take
 For love of ease and lucre's sake?

Oh no! those gifts which edify,
 No earthly wisdom can supply;
 Nor can the schools of men impart
 The hidden wisdom of the heart.

The Spirit can alone prepare
 A man, God's message to declare;
 Whom He hath taught we love to hear,
 And deem His ordination clear.

We thus rejoice, our souls are glad;
 We need no men in vestments clad,
 No Priest with robes and mitred brow,
 To stand before an altar now;

To mediate for us with God,
 Or sprinkle us with cleansing blood.
 Jesus, by His one offering made,
 The law's demands has fully paid.

Fulfilled in Him are all the types;
 Our souls are healed by His stripes,
 And still a Priest in heaven He stands,
 And shews His wounded side and hands.

Our intercessor there with God,
 He pleads His merits and His blood;
 Our names upon His breast He bears,
 And all our grief and sorrow shares.

And till His Church is quite complete
 He'll never leave the mercy seat;
 But when the work of love is done,
 The battle fought, the victory won—

O let this thought our spirits cheer—
 Our great High Priest will then appear
 In Kingly robes His saints to bless,
 And with them reign in righteousness.

DELIVERANCE AND VICTORY.

JOSHUA X.

HERE we see Israel in difficulty through the false step they had taken in making a league with the Gibeonites. What a warning to us, to beware lest we be beguiled by fair appearances! Our only safeguard is to ask counsel and to wait on our God, who will not be unfaithful to His own gracious promise: "I will instruct thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye."

Little did Joshua think when he made peace with the Gibeonites of the sorrow, the increased trials that would flow out of it. But it is blessed to see how he is able in the hour of trouble to confide in "the God of all grace."

The message from the Gibeonites reaches him, and instead of sitting down in despair, filled with vain regrets, which under such circumstances we are prone to do, he at once presses on to face the foe.

Could the Lord be unmindful of His beloved people? Would He forsake them in such a time of need? They had been entrapped by the enemy's wiles; they had acted hastily in their own wisdom, instead of asking counsel of Him; but will He leave them to battle against these mighty hosts, and see them crushed beneath their power? Nay, will He not rather come to their help, and tell them He is still on their side? "*Fear them not,*" are His gracious words to Joshua; "for I have delivered them into thine hand."

How these words must have strengthened Joshua's hands and gladdened his heart, as with all the men of war he ventured onwards during that toilsome night. Do we not need to keep them in mind in the day of our discouragement, when the bitter consequences of our mistakes or those of others come upon us?

Mark too the faithfulness of God. The enemies are powerless and discomfited, "and as they fled before Israel, the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them." "They were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword." The battle was the Lord's, and true to His promise, He did deliver the enemy into their hand.

Surely, this narrative should encourage our hearts in the aboundings of God's grace, and great will be our gain if it teach us in our failures and difficulties to look simply to the Lord alone.

Stirred up by these mighty acts of the Lord, Joshua opens wide his mouth, asks for greater things, things still more marvellous. "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon," is the bold demand of his faith.

May we not say that the Lord rejoiced to find one who so deeply understood His love, who could not only trust, but also expect great things from His gracious hand?

"To him that hath shall more be given" are the words of our blessed Lord; and in this spirit was Joshua dealt with, and proved what a heart God had to help His people. "The sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. . . . And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man: for the Lord fought for Israel."

Let us lay these things to heart, beloved: they are written for our learning, our profit. Let us ask ourselves, Do I thus turn to the Lord in the hour of trouble? Do I know Him as ever on my side, and expect great deliverances, mighty victories? Or do I not oftentimes limit the Holy One of Israel, and look for very small things, perhaps nothing, from Him?

Perhaps some one who reads this may be tasting the bitter fruit of some Gibeonitish league, entered into in

some unguarded moment. Let such an one listen: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in ME is thy help." Let us but draw near with lowly, contrite heart, confessing our shame, our guilt, and pleading the only worthy name, the name of Jesus, and our cry will enter the ear of our God, and He will still undertake for us, and put forth His marvellous power on our behalf. "O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever," will again be our joyful song.

But Joshua could not rest satisfied with deliverance from present difficulty; he longed for complete victory. Let our slothful souls be roused by his example: "Stay ye not, pursue after your enemies . . . for the Lord your God hath delivered them into your hand." Thus did he cling to God's gracious promise, and help Israel by reminding them of it.

They pursued, and very great was the slaughter, and in peace they return to Makkedah. The five kings who sought to escape by taking refuge in the cave are brought forth. Israel's captains place their feet on the kings' necks, and Joshua exhorts them with those wondrous words whose meaning he had learned: "Fear not, nor be discouraged, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies." The kings are then slain, hanged on five trees, and buried out of sight. What a glorious triumph. Those mighty hosts, before whom many a one quailed, where are they? those kings who leagued together to destroy the people of God, where are they? All vanquished beneath Israel's feet!

The same mighty God is for us, on our side, ready to fight our battles. Yet what know we of victories so marvellous, of foes beneath our feet, buried out of sight? What unspeakable joy and blessing, could we with truth say, "They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise!"

Let us take courage, and earnestly beseech our God

to quicken our souls. The promises made to us in Christ are richer, fuller far than Israel's; then, why, oh, why should not we be "more than conquerors through Him who loved us?"

Joshua did not grow weary of the fight. This chapter shows us how he followed on, and diligently sought to conquer every foe, just as did the apostle when he said, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after." City after city falls, king after king is destroyed, "because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel."

Surely, if we ponder on these things, and see how God graciously reveals Himself as the deliverer of His people, our hearts will be encouraged, our faith strengthened. Let us, then, expect great things and marvellous from His loving hand, and let us say with joy, "My help cometh from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

Our chapter closes with these words: "And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp at Gilgal," a spot which blessedly tells of reproach "rolled away."

THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION.*

SOME CLUES TO ITS PRINCIPLES, AND AN OUTLINE OF ITS CONTENTS.

THE Revelation is the book of the unveiling of Jesus Christ. The last time that the world beheld Him was on the cross; the next time will be when He shall appear in all His glory, and with all His saints. The book is occupied not so much with an account of His reign, as with the mode of its being set up in power. Its main subject is a sketch of the onward course of events, from the moment of Christ's rejection of the professing church in chapter iii. unto the moment of His appearing at length to take vengeance on His foes

* Lincoln's Leaflets. No. 10.

in chapter xix. Here we see how they shall be judicially hardened on the one hand, and a remnant of Israel prepared to welcome Him upon the other.

Chapter I. is an epitome of the Book. There is a vision of Christ as Son of Man, *i.e.*, Judge. There the *church* is heard singing, and the *Jew* seen penitentially wailing, whilst the *world's* idols are judged by His title of Alpha and Omega.

Chapters II. and III. disclose the reasons why He "must" ($\delta\epsilon\iota$, chap. i., iv., and xxii.) interfere in judgment. For there in panorama is sketched the decadence to utter apostasy of that professing church which He left here to witness for Himself. Quickly leaving its first love, it first permits and then accepts Nicolaitanism, or clerisy. Then follows Judaism; then Balaamism, or amalgamation of church and world; then Jezebelism, or Popery. A little remnant clinging to Him, have their eye directed to their Lord's return; and though a large mass are moved by their testimony, yet continuing in their religious formalism, are warned of impending judgment.

Chapters IV. and V. Now the scene changes. In answer to the latent enquiry as to what God will do in view of the pass to which matters on earth have come, attention is fixed on the throne there. At some unnamed moment, in between iii. and iv., the true church is removed away from the world to her eternal home. And here it is seen in peace and glory, as represented by twenty-four elders for worship, and as the four cherubim for service. The title-deeds of the inheritance of this world are seen in the hands of the throne-sitter. Now a public call is made for anyone who is worthy to take those deeds, at once to come forth. Hereupon the Lamb once slain, by advancing to that throne asserts his worthiness, and God by giving them unto Him admits His claim. Thereupon the tide of joy rises in heaven, a burst of praise and adoration escapes from all around the throne, com-

menced by the church, then passing out to angels, and extending to the remotest confines of creation. Hence iv. pictures the last moment in heaven ere a commencement is made by God of placing the world on a redemption-footing,—of course by judgment. And v. is the first moment of the new state of things. Together they show the handing over of the world by God to a rejected Christ.

VI. Now the Lamb prepares to take possession of what has been given to Him. What though His foes down here are many and mighty! What though He is the Lamb, the slain Lamb (and throughout this book *αρνιον*, the little Lamb), yet His wrath shall crush them all. As He opens the first seal, and the church, at once acting with Him, calls through the first cherub, "Come," *i.e.*, Come on, Antichrist begins to assume shape and substance. As if to defy Him to His very face, who will presently come down for war on a white horse, so he, too, Antichrist is here pictured. Now ensue war, famine, and pestilence, as predicted in Matt. xxiv. These excite Messiah's foes to wreak their hate on many of His Jewish witnesses here. Also large numbers of the clergy of the last or Laodicean form of nominal Christianity now openly apostatize, and also the empty form of Christianity, left after the true church's rapture, is now repudiated by the RULERS of the world; not that earth is yet ripe for His appearing, oh, no!

It should be observed, that when the seals have been opened, the general result is that His foes tremble, wrongly imagining that He will at once appear. But as the hardening process is continued under the trumpets, which are the seven sub-divisions of the seventh seal, the nations are rendered haughtily indifferent and sullen; you hear no more of their trembling, as you did before. (Contrast vi. 16 with ix. 20, 21.) And when this same process is completed under the vials, which are the seven sub-divisions of the seventh

trumpet, then what was once Christendom is beheld in its chivalry gathered on the plains of Megiddo, in defiance of Him, if He should come down and interpose for the rescue of His ancient people Israel. (Contrast vi. 16 and ix. 20 with xix. 19.) The little Lamb (*apviov*), and the frequent use of the symbol of the war-horse, are key notes of this book.

VII. Here the seer pauses in the prophecy, in order to give us a glimpse of the eternal security of the elect remnant of Israel, and of the multitude from the Gentiles, who shall be kept from abandoning their hope in Israel's Messiah; for a persecution of these is impending, such as there has never been the like.

VIII. The Lamb also pauses now for awhile for His to call upon Him. This they do; and by the answer accorded of judgment on their foes, you perceive their petitions to resemble many in the Psalms. He hears, and at once all prosperity disappears from the earth; the governments of the old Roman empire are overpowered by the people; some great and notable ecclesiastic openly renounces his empty Christian profession, and the old monarchs, and nobility, and clergy disappear before the rising tide of democracy.

IX. Now follow the woe trumpets, *i.e.*, the woes on *men* that shall make earth almost a hell. That great ecclesiastic who, under trumpet three, had publicly renounced the name of Christ, calls on hell to help him, as Saul had done before. Now are rife witchcraft and necromancy, and spiritualism, and by these, men are goaded on more than ever in their rage against the little Lamb. Under the sixth trumpet the defiance still increases, aided by some horrible doctrine as bad as atheism.

X. XI. Now Christ lets Israel know that the time for His interposition in their behalf has nearly arrived. He is seen standing up, and with the book of God's promises to Israel spread open before Him. (xi.) The number of his witnesses on earth is indeed attenuated;

yet they are clothed with power, as when of old Moses and Aaron stood before Pharaoh. Slain, He raises them, and then the seventh trumpet sounds; its effects here, epitomised in chapter xi. 15, are more fully traced in chapters xvi.-xviii. But here the continuity of the prophecy is interrupted by a great parenthesis.

XII. to XIV. is a full account of the great tribulation in its bearing on the servants of God. For the other chapters trace God in wrath hardening the hearts of His foes. This parenthesis is here inserted to show why God proceeds to extremities in His vengeance. XII. is a wonderful chapter; it exhibits the hidden cause of the great tribulation to be the total casting down, out of the heavenlies, of Satan and his angels, by THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH. (See Leaflet on Rev. xii.)

XIII. pictures the tribulation itself. Satan, now cast down to earth, causes the democracy to elect a great Roman emperor, and ten confederate kings of Europe, together with an eminent and false teacher. Together these institute, a new religion, viz., the worship of the emperor and of his image, with the penalty of death attached to all recusants.

XIV.-XV. 4. Here are the outcomers from the tribulation, and a general account of the judgment. In vii. the outcomers were looked at anticipatively; in xiv. the glance is retrospective.

XV. 5-XVI. The general subject is here resumed from xi. 15. Heaven's last woe on men, ere Christ comes down, is subdivided into seven parts, as of old was the case, when on the seventh day the trumpet sounded before Jericho seven times. As then Jericho fell, so now Babylon falls. As the literal Babylon perished by the drying up of its great river; so the PEOPLES of Christendom finally and deliberately reject every vestige of Christianity, and its unregenerate clerics and professors receive no more countenance or help from the world on which it had leaned for support.

XVII., XVIII. Here are two pictures. In the

former chapter, we behold the harlot Babylon and her daughters, *i.e.*, the world's churches in all their luxury, just ere they are set aside, and their religious systems extirpated violently by the newly elected emperor and his ten kings, in acquiescence of the hearty will of all their peoples. In xviii. God's hand is seen in these judgments on the ecclesiastical apostacies of Christendom. In iii. Christ has warned He was about to vomit the professing Church in her last or Laodicean phase out of His mouth. Now, in righteous consequence of His repudiation of it, the world finally scorns it all too. The apostacy commenced with leaving first love, and with the practice of clerisy; here is the final issue.

XIX. Now Israel may shout Alleluia! (Compare Joshua vi. 20.) Yea, all of God's servants rejoice at length at the divine judgment of that apostacy—in all its ramifications, which was so grossly wrested for earthly gain—from the pure religion of the Lord Jesus. But oh! to think that when He returns, not a vestige of Christianity will be found. His saints He had caught up to glory; the peoples rid themselves of all the shams. And not only so, but they institute instead the worship of the emperor. And this is what those churches and chapels—so eagerly built now-a-days, under various plausible pretences, and by the world's help, what they shall finally be used for. Thus will the whoredom be judged.

But will the Lord tremble at His foes now turning to challenge Himself? Oh no! Here we find that just before the clouds part and He descends, He is engaged in celebrating His marriage. Then the church and all His saints, taking their cue from Him, come down as the armies of heaven, and are with Him as He deals with earth's open impiety.

XX.-XXI. 8 maps the onward course of things subsequent to the Lord's interference and throughout the millennium. Then we have the judgment of the wicked dead at its close, and in xxi. 1-8 a glimpse of the eternal state.

XXI. 9 to end of book, goes back to afford us some additional touches of the millennial glory. The book ends with words of warning and encouragement.

WORSHIP FOLLOWED BY SERVICE.

“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.” This is always God’s order: true worship, followed by lowly service. And the service which He delights in is the outflow of a glad and grateful heart, that longs to do something for the One who has done all for it; and our only power for *such* service is the joy of worship.

How we bemoan our poor unworthy service. What sadness steals upon our souls as we look back and ask, What have we done for Christ? How utterly ashamed we feel as we retrace our walk and ways. How little truthfulness of heart, how little self-denial, how little love for souls, how little energy and zeal. And day by day, yes, week by week, and month by month slips by, and still it is the same—and why is this?

Because we have so little fellowship with Christ. Because our souls are well nigh starved, and scarce have strength to drag themselves along. Because our knees are weak through fasting, and therefore quite incapable of long-continued effort.

Ah! did we feed *abundantly* upon the bread of life how different it would be. Did we but *feast* upon the flesh and blood of Christ, and take our fill of His amazing love, how fat and strong we should become. What bursts of praise and gladness would then ascend to Him. How free and full would be our worship. And thus our souls would be as oxen, strong to labour, and instead of bemoaning our leanness and weakness, we should delight ourselves in Christ; and strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, we should be ready and able to do His will, to run with patience, or to suffer with joyfulness.

THE EPISTLES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

REVELATION ii. iii.

THE epistles to the churches in Revelation ii. iii. are full of important truth for the believer in Christ. They apparently form a supplement to the other epistles, and teach us how to behave ourselves so as to please our beloved Lord and Master, when corruption and evil of varied kinds have crept into the church and defiled the temple of God.

The temple of God is holy, which temple are *we*, beloved in the Lord; and it is true *now*, as it was in the days of the apostles, that "if any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy."

He has separated us to Himself by the blood of His own Son, that we might be "built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ;" and when believers are thus builded together they form "a habitation of God through the Spirit," where in marvellous grace He delights to dwell, and to reveal Himself to His waiting and expecting people.

An unconverted person necessarily defiles this holy temple of the Lord. He has no part nor lot in the matter. He may be pure in his own eyes, but he has not been washed from his filthiness; and when such an one is builded in among the living stones which Christ has quickened, he not only defiles the temple of God by his personal uncleanness, but also brings with him a quantity of allowed and cherished evil, which will be sure to leaven and defile the true believers.

Thus was it with most of the seven churches of Asia. Persecution for Christ's sake had in a measure ceased, and professors had gradually crept into the churches; and these epistles not only contain the Lord's solemn condemnation of the varied evils which had gradually accumulated, but also give the needed

word of exhortation and comfort to encourage the true-hearted among them to cleave to the Lord, and to follow Him fully, notwithstanding the abounding declension and disorder.

These epistles have a special bearing upon our own day, when instead of the world and the church standing in their own distinct and proper distance from one another they have literally shaken hands, and in too many cases an unholy compact has been formed of mutual forbearance and toleration.

We need to remember and to follow the bold and faithful conduct of Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and others (see Ezra iv. 1-3), who would not suffer the adversaries of Israel to help them in building the temple, but said to them, "Ye have nothing to do with us to build a house unto the Lord our God, but *we ourselves together* will build unto the Lord God of Israel." He has severed us from other people that we should be a special treasure unto Himself, and He desires to see us a holy nation, a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Oh, may He stir us up to listen to and obey His oft repeated and solemn word, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

The Lord Jesus Himself, in the intensity of His love and care for these churches, addresses them *separately*, and presents Himself to each with a different but strikingly appropriate title.

Their declension and evil was no matter of indifference to Him. He was intent upon their restoration and blessing. He does not deal with them in the rough and ready way in which we so often deal with each other, but with the exquisite skill of a true Master of hearts. He presents Himself to each under the special title which was most calculated to tell upon their affection, and speak to their consciences; and then with unmeasured grace and patience seeks to stimulate them to repentance. He reveals their true condition, as known and seen by Himself, speaks of

their works, and praises all He can; yea more, condescends to enlarge upon that which is pleasing to Him, and then in faithfulness and love tells them where they had turned aside, or were growing cold, or grieving, or dishonouring Him.

Does He not also deal thus with us? Are not His eyes and His heart intently fixed upon us? Does He not consider and know our works? Is He not examining our ways? And does He not see and grieve over our declension? Surely He speaks to us from the highest heaven, as He did to them, entreating us to hear His voice, to listen to His rebukes, to amend our ways, and to repent and do *our first works*.

THE CHURCH OF EPHEBUS.

REVELATION ii. 1-7.

THE first church which the Lord Jesus addresses is Ephesus, that wonderful church in which we read of such mighty effects of the word of God (see Acts xix. 1-20), where also Paul laboured so earnestly for three years, ceasing not to warn every one night and day with tears.

The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians was addressed to this church; that epistle so replete with dispensational truth, and so full of the present and eternal riches and glory of the Church of God; that epistle which more than any other unfolds God's eternal purpose respecting the church, its present heavenly calling and consequent responsibilities, and also its glorious destiny as the Bride—the Lamb's wife.

Some thirty or forty years after this epistle was written, the Lord Jesus again addresses this same church. Let us notice what He says, and consider how far the same language may be applicable to us.

He presents Himself to them as "He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand"—the One from whom all effectual ministry must flow, and who alone

could empower and fit His servants for His service. "Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks"—considering and knowing the state of each, having all fulness in Himself, and ready and willing to instruct, enrich and bless them in every way. *Walking* in their midst (as he walked in Paradise in the cool of the day), not only that *they* might have companionship and fellowship with Him, but also that He might have the joy of intercourse with them, and delight Himself in the pleasant fruits which His grace and power had produced.

Such is the gracious way in which He seeks to revive their affections towards Himself, and then He says, "*I know thy works.*" He had searched them through and through, watched their down-sitting and their uprising, and was acquainted with all their ways, and what would He say of their works?

His piercing eye must have discerned much and continual failure, much self-seeking and vain-glory, much folly and perverseness; but He speaks not of this. He desired not to complain; He would far rather commend and encourage them, and thus we find He takes forth the precious from the vile, and first speaks, and makes much of what He can acknowledge and praise.

"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience." Blessed and wonderful commendation! He had seen their work of faith, and noted their labour of love; still more He had watched their patient continuance in well-doing; all was remembered, and all was prized by Him. He also praises their hatred of evil; it was abhorrent to them; they could not bear it. False teachers had come in among them, but in obedience to His command they had tried the spirits, and rejected them as not of God. They had also borne patiently, toiled on, and not fainted; and He speaks of it all, and assures them of the pleasure He has found in all these fruits of His Spirit.

Surely this is unwonted praise, and how plainly it

tells us of His delight in His people, and of His readiness to accept and own their service. May this His gracious record of their obedience stir us up to more patient and continued labour for Him.

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee.” What! such devoted and continued service, and yet somewhat against them? Yes: His heart could discern the secret but growing canker. He saw the seeds of decay were gaining ground, and in faithfulness He raises the warning word. “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou has left thy first love.”

Their love was growing cold. It was gradually dwindling and withering away, and their service was of no value to Christ unless it were the fruit of love. This is very solemn, and yet exceedingly precious, and should give us great joy, because it proves how intensely He loves us. The Lord desires our love; He wants our affections; to see our hearts true to Him, and intently set on pleasing Him.

A good conscience is a very good thing, and should be carefully maintained; but what value will Christ set upon a good conscience, if love is dying out? What father would be satisfied with his child's conscientiously obeying him? or what husband with his wife's conscientiously doing her duty? Nothing short of *love* can satisfy an affectionate father, or a loving husband. So is it with our blessed God; nor will He accept our service unless it be in some measure the fruit of love—the love of Christ constraining.

The whole life of the Lord Jesus when passing through this world of sin and woe was a life of love. From the beginning to the end of His course it was all the fruit of love. A deep and burning love which breathed in every word, and gave a tone and character to every act. And when He was about to leave this world, and return to His Father in heaven, we hear Him say, “As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.”

He has sent us forth as His witnesses, to represent HIM, to tread in His steps, and to show forth His praises. The deepest, strongest love ever filled and actuated HIM, and He has made us partakers of His nature, and desires that the same love should fill our hearts; indeed any service or obedience that does not spring from love, is unworthy of Him; it is a false witness of what HE is, and is a parody of His grace and truth.

We should look well to this; for it is easy to go on for a time in a dead routine of heartless service, while alas, love is declining; and Satan will help to deceive us, and to bolster us up with the hope that all is right, because for Christ's name's sake we are labouring still, and have not fainted. But such obedience or service will not last. It will wither and come to nought, and Christ will blow upon it. Listen to His solemn words, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

Yes, He will remove our candlestick, whether individually or collectively, unless the flame of love be kept alive within us. This is the secret of many a withered assembly, and many a withered saint. Love has declined, and become more and more feeble, and the light has grown gradually dim, until at last the mere semblance of light and life remains, and there is only a name to live, while death is stamped on all that is done or said.

Let us take heed to the warning word: "Remember from whence thou art fallen, and *repent*." "Return unto me, and I will return unto you." We must seek increased fellowship with Christ. He is ever seeking fellowship with us, walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; nay, more still—standing, knocking at the door of our hearts, that He may come in and sup with us, and we with Him. Oh, may such match-

less amazing grace subdue and melt these callous hearts, and constrain us to give ourselves more time for intercourse with Him.

Nothing short of personal fellowship with Christ can keep the flame of love alive and bright within us, or revive it when it has become dim. The fountain of love is in HIM alone, and only as we receive out of His fulness can His love be shed abroad in our hearts. He pours the golden oil out of Himself into the golden candlestick; and if selfishness or pride or worldliness or any other sin be allowed to clog the pipe—to come in between the soul and Christ—the oil will cease to flow, and the flame to burn, and coldness and indifference naturally follow.

“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen.” HE remembers how we once loved Him. So precious is our love to Him that He treasures it up, and delights to dwell upon it. Listen to His words to Israel, “I remember thee, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after ME in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.”

He well remembered how they had followed Him into the sandy desert, whose sterile soil could yield them no supplies, no food to eat, no water for their thirst. But were they losers there? Ah, no, His power availed, His grace abounded, and though their love grew cold, His faithfulness remained, and all their need was met. The flinty rock sent forth its copious streams, the heaven rained down continual manna for their food, while quails were sent to yield them flesh.

So would it be with us, did we but follow Jesus fully. This world should be just such a wilderness to us—a barren waste indeed, with nought to satisfy our souls; but let us walk with Jesus through it, and we shall prove that HE is no wilderness to us—no land of darkness verily, but from His bounteous hand the streams of life and light and love will flow, and strength and gladness, yea, joy unspeakable, will fill our daily cup.

But mark what follows. How wonderful! another word of praise: "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate." Verily, He finds no pleasure in reproofs, but loves to speak of what He can commend.

His faithfulness is such He cannot pass the evil by. The warning word, nay more, the threatening word, must be pronounced. A death-like sleep of self-security was creeping o'er their souls. They must be roused before it be too late. Their negligence of Christ must be reproved; but see how soon He speaks the reassuring word, and seeks to cheer them to the race again. How quick His hand to heal the wounds His words had made—how ready to revive the contrite heart, and bid the humble one again rejoice.

Such is our Lord—our own beloved Lord! He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, but with the deepest, tenderest love pursues the wayward, wandering soul, nor will He rest until He bring it to His fold again.

Our blessed Lord then turns from the church collectively, and speaks to each individual saint: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Solemn yet invigorating words. If others will not hear, the blessing may yet be ours, for blessed indeed are they that hear His words and keep them. If some are too much occupied with other things to give heed to Him, we may individually be found like Mary sitting at His feet, and who can measure the inestimable treasures we shall there receive?

Then follows the glorious promise—"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God:" a promise the foretaste of which should be enjoyed in the present time, as surely as in the future glory.

We shall *actually* eat of the tree of life when we dwell with Christ in the midst of the paradise of God. We shall then have uninterrupted communion with

our beloved Lord—the veritable tree of life—and shall feed continually on the fresh acts and words of love, which will continually flow from Him : but “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,” and to him that overcometh is granted even now to have a fore-taste of this blessed and satisfying fruit.

“If a man love me, he will keep my words ; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him : and I will love him and will manifest myself unto him.”

Yes, the Lord Jesus will specially manifest Himself to the one who overcomes his natural sluggishness, and will not rest without the habitual enjoyment of His presence. He will feed *such* an one with secret and personal revelations of His love, and cause him to drink of the river of His pleasures. And the soul that thus feeds on the goodly fruits of the heavenly Canaan, will have no taste or relish for any of the dainty meats wherewith Satan seeks to tempt it.

May these precious and loving words of our blessed Lord come with reviving power to our souls. May we so cleave with purpose of heart to Him, that we may continually receive out of His own abundant fulness, and thus grow up into Him in all things ; and then instead of our love decaying and withering away, it will increase and abound yet more and more. The Lord grant it for His own name’s sake. Amen.

DEVELOPMENT OF LIFE IN THE BELIEVER.

THERE are few mysteries greater and deeper than those which are connected with the implantation and development of the divine life in the heart. It is at once so immediate yet so progressive, so perfect yet so imperfect, so maintained by God in the power of the Spirit, and yet so hindered by the joint antagonism of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Many children of God experience a difficulty in harmonizing the apparent paradox that exists between the divine statement that the believer is perfect in Christ Jesus, and yet the evident fact that of all imperfect beings he is the most imperfect. In order that we may have the Word for our guide, and lean not to our own conception, let us follow the leadings of the Spirit in Romans v. 1-11.

Here we have faith's access into the grace of God given to us as the standing of the believer, and then as the result of that standing in the Beloved, a three-fold cause of boasting and joyful exultation, in the rise and progress of the work of God.

The condition of the believer in the opening clause of v. 1, is that of one justified on the ground of faith, not on the ground of works, nor of anything in himself whatever, but simply on the ground of reliance in the person of another, even in the Son of God, whom God raised on account of our justification.

Justification involves not only a forgiveness of sin, but a complete investiture of "righteousness and true holiness," in which the justified sinner stands acceptable, and an object of complacency to the holy God. This is effected in the substitutionary work of Christ, which lies at the foundation of all God's dealings with us.

We do not progress towards this, but start from it as those who have been quickened, and raised, and made to sit in heavenly places together with Christ. There cannot possibly be growth or development in this; it is the work of Christ for us, given to us the moment we receive Christ as given to us of God.

This then is the Rock on which we stand—"the Rock of Ages," our Substitute, who has become "unto us of God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;" and when faith grasps, even feebly, these mighty words, we can thank God and say, "All is mine," however little the soul fathoms what that *all* implies.

The justified and glorified condition of the believer in Christ is the perfect ground of our standing before God; and it is also the starting-point in the divine life, whence God in renewing power leads the believer step by step through all the days, and weeks, and years of His dealings with him. By one act He raises us in Christ from the dunghill of nature to the throne of glory (1 Sam. ii.); and then by many acts, and through many vicissitudes, by a lengthened process, He works out and develops the new life He has bestowed; and by the daily renewing of the Holy Ghost conforms to the likeness of Christ, and thus *imparts* to the person what had been previously *imputed* to him in Christ.

From this stand-point the apostle tells us of three distinct aspects in which we are enabled to make our boast or find our joy and exultation. The word rendered "rejoice" in *v. 2*, "glory" in *v. 3*, and "joy" in *v. 11*, is in Greek the same in each case. It is a word which beautifully embraces each signification, and implies that triumphant boast of one who sees victory and joy in all that lies before him.

First, "we make our boast in hope of the glory of God," a ground of boasting that has to do with our future expectation. This forms the first joy of the awakened sinner when he learns that heaven and its glory is what lies before him.

Many would fain stop there, and would foolishly wish to build tabernacles on such a mount, saying in heart with Peter, "It is good to be here." But there is a "*not only so*" that meets them in the midst of this joy. They have to come back and to learn in the experience of the way a new lesson, to make their boast in something very different, and to join their Lord and their brethren, like Peter, James, and John, in the conflict with Satan at the foot of the holy mount.

These are holy and dark mysteries in which faith often falters, as the brightness of the glory passes away, and we enter into the cloud.

The apostle continues: "And not only so, but we make our boast in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." We at once perceive the difference between the boasting and rejoicing here and that which went before. There faith takes the eye off present realities to future glories; here faith looks at present things in the light of the love of God which the Spirit sheds abroad in the heart.

Truly we may say, the way is long; partly of necessity as in the purpose of God, who in six days created the heavens and the earth, and not in one; and partly from lack of faith in those who are called to walk with God and fail to do so. In regard to the former, we are reminded of that passage in Exodus where, after the paschal night, it is said that God took the people, "not through the way of the land," *although "that was near,"* but *He "led them about through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea."*

But there is also a near way and a longer way through the wilderness. In the song of Moses he realizes the near way (and that is the way of God's eternal purpose in Christ towards us), and overpassing the wilderness he says, "Thou hast guided them in thy strength into thy holy habitation." Thus typically Israel found access by faith into "the grace wherein we stand."

Unbelief made the *long* way by which God led them through the wilderness *longer* still. We do well to notice the distinction between the *needs be* of God's gracious dealings with us that prolongs the journey, and the *needs-not-be* lengthening of the way which results from our unbelief, our murmurings, and our wilfulness.

The first step in our needs-be journey is *tribulation*—affliction in various ways—from without and from

within, from the world, the flesh, and the devil. It is through much tribulation that the kingdom has to be entered, even as it was with "strong crying and tears" that the Holy One offered up prayers and supplications to Him that was able to save Him from death; "for He learned obedience by the things that He suffered."

Obedience in suffering and submission in affliction can only be learnt as it is passed through; and that bowing of the heart to God that enables the tried soul to say, "Not my will but thine be done," can only be learnt in the hour of darkness.

Christ is our *Substitute* in the matter of our salvation, but He is also our *Ensample* in the wilderness. He bore the cross for us for our justification; but as disciples the words are ever sounding in our ears, "Take up thy cross, and follow me." There is but one highway through the wilderness, and that is the one the Master trod before us, in which we are to be followers and imitators, doing what He did, and bearing what He bore; for "He pleased not Himself;" but the reproaches of those that reproached God fell on Him.

Affliction works endurance or patience. Of this James says, "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

Thus those who have already been made perfect in Christ have to be made perfect in the development of the new nature. The perfect stature of Christ has to be grown up into, and the pathway of this growth lies through tribulation; and he who would grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ must be content to walk in the only way that makes such grace and knowledge attainable.

It is no light work, no surface reception of the seed, that can bring about such results. The knowledge of Christ is a depth none can fathom, and he who would know HIM must go down deep. Deep into the depths, and high up into the mountain tops, must he enter who would really be able to make his boast in this royal

road to glory and to peace, where there is not merely *faith* in the truth but a *realization* of it. "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." Note the word "*worketh*." God is the worker, and "we are His workmanship;" but these are the instruments in His hands. He uses them, and patiently leads and disciplines us all the way through, ever aiming at one object, to make us partakers of His holiness. As that is attained here, so shall we realize the beauty and glory of holiness hereafter. This discipline is solemn work, which, to accomplish God's end, needs that we go along with God in it.

Endurance has its own blessed inworking, and it produces experience or proof—a proof in two ways, of all that God is to our souls, and of what we are to Him.

Few subjects are of deeper importance than that of *proving*. We are apt to be content with a God that we have never proved, and to expect that He will be content with protestations of love and obedience that He has never proved. "Prove me now herewith," says God to Israel; but the proving of a loving faith has to be distinguished from the provings of unbelief, of which we have so many sad examples in Israel's history.

When God gave Christ *for* us, He proved Him to us. We are not called to trust in an unproved Saviour. His provings we see all through the four Gospels—proved of God, proved of Satan, by friend and foe, by saint and sinner,—proved of all, and found faultless, and hence He has become to us the *proved* or tried "*corner stone*" on which faith builds. (Isa. xxviii. 16.)

This proving is the result of endurance; and of this Peter speaks when he says, "*The proving*" (same word as in Rom. v. 2) "of your faith is much more precious than of gold that perisheth." The proving of faith is ever precious alike to God and to the believer. This we have in the record of Abraham offering up Isaac, when he found that His God was indeed "Jehovah-

jireh;" and God could then say, "*Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me.*"

It is in this way that we get the answer to the prayer: "*Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts.*" (Ps. cxxxix. 23.) The prayer ascends, and the answer comes, and the faithful servant is able to present himself "approved unto God"—one that needeth not to be ashamed. This should be our great study; and to this Paul directed his son Timothy (2 Tim. ii. 15), as one who was called to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

Experience necessarily leads to hope; for it has dealt with the God of hope; and hence the far-off hope of the future (*v.* 2) becomes the source of a present joy, "because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us." The hope here contemplated is the result of a present or continued outpouring of the love of God into the soul. The trials of the way, and the realization of God in them, have been the means by which the heart has been enlarged. Its capacity is increased, and thus it is able to receive and to return more of the love of God.

This is the growth of the divine life in the believer, which, if unhindered by the flesh, would go on and increase with the increase of God; and wherever love finds an unhindered resting-place, there holiness maintains its power.

Whether dispensationally or personally, it is ever true that the kingdom of God is as a seed that springeth, and groweth up man knows not how; "for," says the Lord, "the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." And for this the husbandman hath long patience till he receive the early and the latter rain.

In the matter of growth there is a double responsibility—a divine responsibility and a human—and there

is great danger that one of them be more or less overlooked. Some overlook the divine power that is brought to bear on the development of the life of God, while others overlook the human agency, or our part in co-operation with God, without which God helps in vain; even as the rain of heaven, that might have vitalized the sown seed, falls in vain on the untilled thorny field.

Holiness wrought out in the believer is that fruit for which the husbandman, even God, hath long patience, and sends down His winter and summer rain on the garden He has given us to cultivate. God has long patience, and we must have long patience too; for we are told that the good seed on the good ground are those that bring forth fruit with patience. We need patience with our God and patience with ourselves.

There is no leap into this; no one step from the dung-hill where we were, to the throne where God is, as there was in that which concerns our standing in Christ. Each step up the ladder must needs be a step in faith—faith step by step, a long and patient walk, in which sin every day becomes “more exceeding sinful,” and is recognized not only in its outcomings, but far more deeply in its indwellings in that nature from which there can be no thorough deliverance, till the purpose of our God towards us in Christ is accomplished, and mortality is swallowed up of life.

Holiness is God’s will fulfilled, accepted and rejoiced in. It is realized when the body has been given as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable; for *then*, and then only, are we in a condition to “*prove* the will of God,” and to find it “good and acceptable and perfect.” We have to be on our guard against either a salvation or a holiness made easy. In either case the word is, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”

We now turn from the boasting and triumph, even in tribulation, which experience of Christ gives us, to

that contained in verse 11: "And not only so, but we make our boast in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

This marks the highest attainment in the life of the saint of God—to know HIM, and to be satisfied with HIM. Thus rising above experience, he is able to say with Habakkuk, though all fail, and though every promise seem broken, God remains, and therefore

"I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.
The Lord God is my strength,
And He will make my feet like hinds' feet,
And He will make me to walk upon my high places."

The child of God is then prepared, like Abraham, to receive Isaac back in resurrection, and henceforth it is God Himself that occupies the sole place. Then indeed will the full meaning of the oft repeated "ONLY" in Psalm lxii. be realized, and the truth it contains satisfy.

"My soul, wait thou *only* upon God;
For my expectation is from Him.
He *only* is my rock and my salvation:
He is my defence; I shall not be moved.
In God is my salvation and my glory:
The rock of my strength and my refuge is in God."

This then is the high and holy climax unto which we are called in Christ Jesus, the full meaning of which eternity alone will reveal. May our faith in Christ lead us into these three sources of joy and triumph, and then we shall see that as in the first all was *from* God, so in the second all is *by* God, and in the third all is *to* God; for "*of* Him, and *by* Him, and *to* Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

"How good is the God we adore,
Our faithful unchangeable Friend;
Whose love is as large as His power,
And knows neither measure nor end."

A CHRISTIAN WOMAN.

"Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies . . . She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness."—Prov. xxxi. 10-31; 1 Peter iii. 2-4.

MEEK in her lowly mien—the loving grace
Of Christ, her God and Saviour, we can trace;
Quiet and chaste her speech; with modest fear
She treads her onward path of service here.
Nor would she make this wilderness a home—
She seeks a better city yet to come.

Wisdom and meekness to her words belong,
The law of kindness dwelleth on her tongue;
Not hers the busy gossip's tattling voice,
Which in another's failings would rejoice,
And tell her tales of scandal to a score
Of eager listeners greedy still for more.

Not so the Christian—though her footsteps move
In ready willingness to deeds of love,
To soothe the couch of agony and pain,
The weak and fainting spirit to sustain.
The poor and needy find a listening ear
To all their wants and woes, nor ever fear
The short and cold reply, the harsh rebuke,
Or sparing morsel doled with freezing look;
But willingly she takes of her own store,
To clothe the naked strangers at her door.

No gold, no glittering gem her brow adorns,
For Christ her Saviour wore a crown of thorns.
Nor does she wear the costly garb of pride;
Hers the white robe wrought for a heavenly bride;
Her only ornament the spirit meek,
And quiet mind her Father's child should seek.

So dwells she here—no pride of outward show,
But seeking chief her Master's will to know;
Like Mary, sitting at her Saviour's feet,
In trusting love and resignation sweet,
Waiting till He she longs for shall appear,
To close her work of loving service here;
Till Christ her Lord in glorious power shall come.
And call His loved ones to their heavenly home.

MATTHEW THE PUBLICAN ;

OR, "FOLLOW ME."

WE have a striking illustration of the mighty effect produced by a word from the Lord Jesus in the case of Levi. "The entrance of thy words giveth light;" still more, it gives life. They that hear the voice of the Son of God shall live; His word giveth "understanding unto the simple." So was it with Levi: one word from Christ changed the whole current of his existence.

He is presented to us as Levi, or Matthew the publican, a farmer of the Roman taxes, and belonging to a class of men who were peculiarly obnoxious to the Jews, because of their well known peculations and unjust exactions. Money-making had been the one object of his life: an object which, when it takes possession of the human heart, is perhaps more engrossing and ensnaring than any other.

He was sitting at the receipt of custom, doubtless busily occupied in calculating and counting his gains, when suddenly Jesus passes by. He casts His eye upon him, and simply says "Follow Me," and instantly ledger, receipts, and money, all are left, and up he rises and follows Christ.

The word was with power, and he yielded to the royal mandate. He asked no questions, he made no stipulations; he did not enquire, 'where will you lead me?' or, 'what do you want of me?' or, 'what will you give me?' but, drawn by some inexpressible attraction, he left and sacrificed everything to follow a comparative stranger.

We are not told whether he had previously known anything of Jesus; whether he had seen His miracles or heard His teaching, but he is thus presented to us by the Spirit of God as one who neither consulted with flesh and blood, nor sought to make any compact with

the Lord, but unreservedly yielded up everything for HIM.

Has the word of Jesus had the same effect upon us, beloved in the Lord? We also have heard His voice: He has spoken to us and quickened our souls into life. We have gladly received and owned Him as our Saviour, and in Him "we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins;" but, have we left *all* and followed Christ? Have we fairly yielded ourselves to the Lord Jesus as our Lord and Master? Have we turned our backs upon all our former objects in life—the gratification of self in all its varied forms—and are we now seeking to live so as to please and glorify Him in all our words and ways?

Surely, surely, we need to bow our heads and our hearts in deep humiliation and shame before our God, and to confess how far short we have come, and how little of the spirit that actuated Matthew has been found in us. How much of the unworthy spirit of bargaining has there been in us—the sordid questioning as to what it will cost us to follow Christ fully; the weighing of consequences as to what we might lose, whom we might displease, what enemies we might make, and what scorn and persecution might come upon us! Not so with Matthew: no second considerations were allowed to weigh with him, but with truthfulness and simplicity of heart he turned his back on everything, and started off to follow Jesus wherever He might lead him.

Let us pursue his history a little further, and see what was the result of his conduct.

We read in the Gospel of Luke that Levi made Jesus "a great feast in his own house," and that a great company of publicans and of others sat down with Him. Matthew relates the same incident, but while speaking of the feast he hides himself, and we should not glean from *his* account that he had anything to do with it; thus indicating the true humility which

fellowship with Christ must necessarily produce. But Luke tells us of the *great* feast which Levi prepared, and of the *great* company of publicans and others which he gathered together.

The Spirit of God delights thus to bring before us the largeness of heart which was so speedily produced in Levi. The money-maker was suddenly changed into the liberal dispenser; and the selfish worldling becomes the earnest evangelist who would leave no stone unturned, in seeking to bring others to that blessed One who had given him such joy and gladness.

Such were some of the wonders which grace had wrought, and he is thus honoured in being permitted to provide a feast for the Lord of Glory, and has the joy of using his great house and great riches to bring his friends and companions into contact with Christ, and thus became a co-labourer with Him in that great and blessed work which brought Him down from heaven. This was part of what Matthew gained by his alacrity and true heartedness.

Mark also the honour which Christ put upon him; for while he speaks of himself as "Matthew the publican," he is chosen by the Lord to be one of His twelve apostles, appointed as a witness of His mighty words and deeds, brought into a place of peculiar nearness to Christ, and empowered by Him to cast out devils, and cure all manner of sickness and disease.

Was it not indeed true wisdom in Matthew to leave *all* and follow Jesus? Did he not gain immeasurably more by it than would have entered into the heart of man to conceive? Thus richly and abundantly does the Lord repay any true sacrifice for His name's sake.

Nor was this all. Matthew was also chosen of God to be one of the historians of the path of His Son on the earth, the penman of the Holy Ghost; that hand which in former days had so delighted to handle the gold that perisheth was used to write one of the gospels which are so replete with instruction and bless-

ing: and thus he has been made a channel of blessing to the saints of God all through this dispensation.

And now, beloved in the Lord, what response do our hearts make to this? Has not the blessed Jesus said individually to each of us, "Follow thou me?" And shall we not seek to obey and follow Him in a measure and manner which hitherto we have but little known?

He will lead us into pleasant paths, in the way of righteousness and true holiness. He will cause us to inherit substance, and will fill our treasures. He will give us riches and honour, yea, durable riches and righteousness. He will feed us with the choicest of the wheat, and satisfy us with honey out of the rock. His fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and if we will but follow Him fully, we shall not only bring glory and honour to our God and Father, but obtain joy and gladness, and receive a revenue of blessing to our own souls, of which hitherto we have had no conception.

THE CLEANSING OF THE LEPER.

(LEVITICUS xiv. 1-9.)

PART I.

Most Christians have learnt something of the preciousness and power of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, as typified in the two birds, the one killed and the other "let loose into the open field," which were taken for the cleansing of the leper; but how slow are we to enter into the full, blessed, and yet most solemn instruction given in the subsequent part of this chapter. Yet surely, if such minute detail is given by God for the ceremonial purification of the unclean leper, we should seek that spiritual discernment which would make this scripture profitable for "instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect: thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

After looking at this subject in its distinct and

positive bearing upon Israel, it would seem to apply to the backsliding Christian, who, having departed from the living God, has fallen into sin, has become unclean, and is therefore, like the leprous Israelite, excluded from the camp; that is, shut out from communion with his God. Such an one needs restoring, forgiving grace, to bring him back to the sunshine of God's presence. But the disease of leprosy is so wonderful a type of sin, as viewed by a holy God, that we may profitably consider it in its general application both to saint and sinner, as unfolding the *entire* perfectness of Christ's salvation, and the fulness of His sacrifice to meet *all* sin, and to maintain that holiness that becometh God's house.

When a poor sinner has been made to feel something of the uncleanness of sin in God's sight, of the distance between himself and the God of all holiness, the language of his heart is, "Woe is me; for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips;" he then longs to know the blessedness of sin put away, and to feel the peace and joy of being brought *nigh* to God, of being able to enter His presence, and rest in His love, without one stain of defilement, or anything that would be unfit for that perfect holiness before which even the very angels veil their faces.

The condition of the leper is a very forcible emblem of the sinner; for this dreadful disease could be cured *only* by God. This was what Naaman had to learn when sent by his master to the king of Israel, who could only exclaim, "Am I God, to kill and make alive, that this man doth send unto *me* to recover a man of his leprosy?" (2 Kings v. 7.)

The poor leper was commanded to have his "habitation without the camp" (Lev. xiii. 45, 46), "standing afar off," "dwelling alone," his clothes rent, his head bare, crying, "Unclean, unclean!" in desolation and wretchedness, suffering a kind of living death. (See Num. xii. 12.) He was deprived of all that makes the

interest and happiness of life—of home, and the love and endearments that are the sunshine of that home, and was cast *only* upon God to give healing and life. He had no hope in man, or in any efforts of his own, to get the healing he so much craved, but must wait until God's priest pronounced him clean.

Does not this fitly describe the awakened sinner who realises in any measure the corruptness of his heart? He is cast on God *alone* to wash away his sins, to heal his sin-sick soul, to give him life from the dead. He learns his powerlessness to put away one sin, or make himself holy; in other words, "to bring a clean thing out of an unclean." And surely such an one can enter into the adoring praise and thanksgiving of the healed leper, the peace and happiness that must have flooded his soul, as the priest pronounced him *clean*.

It is very precious to learn God's grace in all the details of this wonderful type. We read, "He shall be brought unto the priest, and the priest shall *go forth* out of the camp," &c. (*vv.* 2, 3.) Does not this remind us of the prodigal son? "While he was yet a great way off, the father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." The sinner still puts himself in the far-off place, "without strength," "ungodly." His cry, "I have sinned," is met by the Father's loving response, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." Thus grace meets the sinner: "The Son of man is come to *seek* and to save that which was lost."

We then read (*vv.* 4-7) how the leper was taught, through types and shadows, the blessed power of the death and resurrection of the Lamb of God. By the command of the priest, but not by his act, one of the birds was killed. Does not this speak of our great High Priest, who, "after He had offered one sacrifice for sin, for ever sat down on the right hand of God"? And now we have only to learn the value and

efficacy of His death on the cross. "We are reconciled to God by the death of His Son," "justified by His blood."

The bird was to be killed in a vessel over running water, which may possibly point out the ever-flowing, life-giving power of the precious blood as applied to the soul by the Holy Ghost. The living bird, with scarlet, cedar, and hyssop, was then dipped into the blood of the bird that was killed, and the priest sprinkled the blood seven times upon the leprous man and then pronounced him *clean*, and let the living bird loose into the open field.

Surely, as the man watched the flight of the released bird, peace sank into his soul. He saw God's acceptance of the sacrifice, he felt his leprosy was healed, and knew that all that pertained to it was gone in the sight of God.

As the blood was sprinkled upon him seven times, and he was then pronounced clean, so the cleansed sinner should realise the preciousness of the blood of Christ to purge the conscience "from dead works to serve the living God." In the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the believer sees God's acceptance of the sacrifice, and his heart bursts forth in praise unto Him "who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." How sweetly and powerfully should the exhortation sound in his ears: "If (or since) ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on the things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Thus the sinner who looks at the cross of Christ, and learns the virtue of His death for him, must in some measure feel himself cut off from the world, separated, *rescued* from it, and would say with the apostle, "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." Henceforth he should surely count the world a vain thing, a dead thing, and thus he would cast aside all its glory and honour, all its sweetness and beauty: he would also count all his own goodness and morality, his efforts after holiness as nothing, as worse than nothing, only worthy of death.

Thus far every child of God must be able to respond to the precious truths conveyed in the type of the two birds, or he can have but feebly realised God's way of salvation, His perfect satisfaction in the atonement of Christ, by which He can be "just and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." But now let us look at what was required further before the man cleansed of the leprosy could enter into his tent.

We read that the man had still "to tarry abroad out of his tent seven days." (v. 8.) Now we are fully and plainly taught that the moment the sinner believes in the Lord Jesus he is accepted, saved. He has "passed from death unto life," and the Father hath made him "meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light," so that he may boldly enter into the very presence of God. What, then, are we to learn from this work of "seven days" during which the cleansed man was to "tarry abroad"?

Let us imagine ourselves in his place, and consider what must have been his meditations. We may well believe that his heart was overflowing with love and praise, and yet how deep must have been his sense of the utter corruption and misery from which he had just been delivered: and then, as he dwelt upon God's holiness, which could admit no uncleanness into His camp, must he not have seriously considered the holy requirements which would befit one so signally blessed?

Those waiting-days must indeed have been a solemn heart-searching time. The love which had healed him without any deserving on his part must have constrained him to resolve henceforth to live to that lov-

ing God to whom he owed so much; to devote the restored health, yea, rather the renewed life, wholly to God in separation from everything contrary or displeasing to Him. Hence he is commanded to shave off *all* his hair—that is, to cut off all the glory of the flesh. (It seems almost needless to notice that in Scripture hair represents the strength and beauty of nature.) Then he was to wash his clothes, and his flesh, and “*he shall be clean.*” The priest had pronounced him clean on the first day, but he was thus made morally and *practically* so.

Surely, the forgiven sinner may learn much in all this. Would that believers were more occupied with meditations on the cross of Christ, there to learn the exceeding sinfulness of sin, when the holy Son of God had thus to suffer and to die to make expiation for sin. It is there we learn God’s holiness, and yet His pitying love.

Such thoughts would lead to a juster appreciation of what we were saved *from* and what we are brought *unto*. Self would then be seen more in its true light, as utterly corrupt and vile, to be laid down before the Cross. We should not then see, on the one side, such a light estimate of sin, such easy-going, indifferent Christians; such yielding to the temptations to walk with the world, to follow the ways and habits of those around; such tampering with evil without and within. Nor, on the other hand, should we hear Christians boasting of what they have given up or done for Christ; or speaking as if they had “attained the higher life,” or were hoping to become perfect in the flesh.

Such statements only lead to an exaltation of *self* and a lowering of Christ, and are among Satan’s specious wiles to beguile those whose hearts have drunk in something of the marvellous love of God, and who, moved by that love, desire to “present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.” Oh, that such would believe God’s declaration, that

“the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.”

Let us give all the glory to Him who “is our life,” and rejoice that *He* is “made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

The washing of the clothes and the body by the cleansed leper may well typify that cleansing of our ways, that separation from all evil, from everything that would stain the conscience which the blood of Jesus has purged. And, though “*no flesh* should glory in His presence,” how earnestly should we desire to yield ourselves to God’s holy, constraining power, and to present our bodies to Him “holy and *acceptable*”—as a “sweet odour” (Phil. iv. 18), like the precious ointment—and, surely, this is but our “*reasonable* service!”

May these truths be deeply impressed on our hearts, that henceforth Christ may become our one subject, our one object, our one glory; and, learning the grace of God in truth, may we surrender ourselves spirit, soul, and body, to live to Him alone. Amen and amen.

CONFESSION AND RESTORATION.

I SAMUEL vii.

ISRAEL had sinned, yea, deeply revolted, and the hand of the Lord had gone out against them. He had separated them from other people that they might be His, and had brought them into a good land that they might eat the fruit thereof, and rejoice continually before Him; but in their sin and folly they turned aside from Him and worshipped idols, and obliged Him to deal in judgment with them.

In very faithfulness He could not pass their evil by. We hear Him saying, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”

He is the holy God, and He desired to make them a

holy people unto Himself, but they were a crooked and perverse generation; and again, and again, and again He was obliged to deliver them into the hands of their enemies, and let them prove what it was to be trodden down and oppressed, in order to humble them and bring them to repentance.

How often is it, thus with Christians! We turn aside from Christ our Lord, and set our heart on some forbidden thing, and think to find some good in Satan's dainty meats (Prov. xxiii. 3-6); and then in wretchedness of soul our weary aching hearts are forced to prove what an evil and bitter thing it is to depart from the living God, and that His fear is not in us.

"The fear of the Lord tendeth to life, and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil." He has called us to holiness, and the way of holiness is the way of peace, and blessed are they that hear His words and do them.

"There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked;" and true indeed is this of God's beloved children if *they* depart from Him. Such will have to eat the fruit of their own ways, and prove the solemn warning of those words: "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee." Would that this fear so filled our hearts as to keep us from sin, and then we should prove for ourselves that His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace.

In the chapter before us we find all Israel *lamenting after the Lord*. For twenty long years they had been groaning under the oppression of the Philistines, without really turning to Him. No doubt Samuel had made repeated efforts to bring them to repentance, but their hearts were hardened, and though they may have often howled upon their beds, they did not cry unto the Lord. Had they cried to Him, and humbled themselves before Him, He would have heard and answered, and in His wonted grace would have appeared for their rescue. But no; they loved their sin, and would not give it up

until they were thoroughly worn down and impoverished by their enemies.

Let us take warning from this. It is hard for us to kick against the pricks. Sin is a very hateful thing to our God, and if we do not yield ourselves to Him to obey and serve Him, He is obliged to correct and chasten us, and may-be bring us very low.

Verily, He had no pleasure in their affliction. His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel, and even while His hand was stretched out against them His heart was yearning over them, and longing to turn again and bless them. How affecting are His words: "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against Him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

"And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve Him only."

This was the first step. There must be truthfulness of heart: a real putting away of sin, and turning to the Lord. We hear of some who sought Him with their lips while their heart was far from Him, but such feigned repentance is worse than useless. If we have wandered from the Lord, and turned aside after any sin or vanity, the evil must be fairly brought before Him, yea, judged in His presence, and confessed with full purpose of heart to forsake it, before there can be *true restoration* of soul.

If we regard iniquity in our heart the Lord will not hear us. There is much *half-repentance*; passing over sin as if it mattered not, and dealing with it as if God were one like ourselves, and thought but little of it; and thus communion with HIM is hindered, the Holy Spirit grieved, and the redeemed of the Lord know little of what it is to be more than conquerors

—*present victors* over the world, the flesh, and the devil.

He loves to have His children near Him, that He may bless and strengthen them; but “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” and if we turn aside from His commandments, He *must* walk contrary to us, and thwart and disappoint instead of prospering us. Ah, did we but cleave to Him with steadfastness of spirit, we should prove what a gracious and bounteous God He is, how ready to meet our desires and gratify our wishes, and crown us with loving kindness and tender mercies.

“Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth.” They were in earnest, they meant what they said, and proved it by their acts, and “*they served the Lord only.*” This should be our object, our one desire and purpose, to serve Him *only*. To live for Him alone, and seek in little things as well as great to do His will.

We should seek to be *pleasant* children to our God; children on whom His eye could rest with joy; children whose constant aim should be to *please Him well*, and then His smile would rest upon our souls, and make us sing for joy. “These things write I unto you that your joy may be full.”

Israel’s conduct encouraged Samuel. He knew somewhat of the grace of his God, and expected He would appear for them, and therefore He commanded all Israel to gather together to Mizpeh. This was a bold step. They were under the power of the Philistines, and any large concourse of people would rouse their suspicions, and cause them to come against them to battle; but Samuel stayed himself upon the Lord his God.

Behold Israel thus gathered together in fear and trembling. They stand before the Lord and Samuel, remembering and confessing their many sins, bemoaning themselves for all their transgressions, and fasting in the bitterness of their souls. They draw water and

pour it out before the Lord, in the confession of their utter weakness and unprofitableness, while Samuel as the true servant of the Lord, sits as the judge, and helps them to understand wherein they have sinned.

This is a true picture of self-judgment, and it would be well for us if we knew far more of this thorough searching out and judging of evil in the presence of the Lord.

While Israel are thus occupied, the Philistines hear of it, and at once come up against them. This fills poor Israel with dismay, and they intreat Samuel not to cease to pray for them.

“And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord.” Samuel knew what was needed. Neither confession, nor repentance, nor prayer could put away sin, and Israel had sinned. “It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul,” and nothing short of *blood* would do. Repentance and confession prepared their hearts to receive the blessing, but the blessing could only flow to them through the blood of the *slain lamb*—pointing onwards as that slain lamb did to the blessed Lamb of God, the *one sacrifice for sin*.

So it is now. A wandering child of God cannot be restored without self-judgment and confession; but the blood, the precious blood of Christ, alone can put away his sin; and until he remembers and looks again to that blood, he will, like Israel, be filled with fear and trembling, and have no consciousness of the Lord's renewed favour and blessing.

The lamb was slain, the blood was sprinkled, and the sweet savour of that burnt-offering ascended up to heaven—speaking to God of the perfectness, and beauty, and glory, of His well-beloved Son—and Samuel's prayers went up to God over that burnt sacrifice, and God heard and answered. As in the days of Noah, when God smelled the sweet savour of the burnt-offering, He said in His heart, “I will not

again curse the ground any more for man's sake, though (*margin*) the imagination of man's heart is only evil from his youth ;" so now the blessing came down in rich abundance, as the expression of God's delight in the burnt-offering.

How true is this now. Our blessings flow to us because of the merits of Christ. They are the expression of God's delight and joy in His precious Son, the outflowings of His love to Him, the answer to His manifold perfectness. Oh what confidence should this give us before our God! What large expectations it should raise in our hearts! We do not draw near to Him to receive what *we* deserve. We do not come to Him bringing our tears, or repentance, or prayers. No; we come in the name of Jesus, laying our hand on HIM as our burnt-offering, pointing to the precious blood as the satisfaction for all our guilt, and asking our God and Father to deal with us as *Christ deserves*. And who can measure His deserts? or who can count the inestimable blessings which would be a true and perfect answer to the infinite merits of that holy and spotless Lamb?

HE stood in our place. HE has taken all our pollution and evil upon Himself, and borne it in His own body on the tree; yea, He was made sin for us, and endured all the consequent wrath and ignominy. The substitution was complete; and now having purged our sins, He arrays us with His infinite merits, and presents us to God to receive from Him what HE—our blessed Substitute—deserves.

Oh, what grace, what love! Well may we marvel at this glorious salvation, so grand, so magnificent, passing all human thought—the natural outflow of the infinite depths of the heart of God. Oh what a God we have; so holy, and yet so gracious; so mighty, and yet so full of tender love—the very God we need to meet our wretched case, and satisfy the cravings of our weary hearts.

Nor is this all; but as Samuel prayed for Israel, so our Jesus ever lives to make intercession for us, and HIM the Father heareth always. Oh how precious are those pleadings unto God! What music in His ears; what joy to His heart; and what blessings—unceasing blessings—are thus brought down upon us! Let us look up and see HIM there, our Advocate, our Great High Priest, who is gone into the presence of God *for us*, and ever lives to love and care for us. Blessed, blessed Jesus, what a debt of love we owe thee!

No wonder the Lord heard and answered Samuel's prayer, perfumed as it was with the sweet savour of that blessed sacrifice. The Philistines might draw near to battle, as they did, but that smoking lamb appealed to God; it told of Christ, and loudly called for help for poor and needy Israel. True, they *deserved it not*, but JESUS *did*, and HE had pledged Himself to bear their sin, and meet their every need.

God owned the mighty plea. He knew the value of His blessed Son, and for His sake, in answer to His matchless worth, the thunders rolled, the lightnings flashed, and terror spread from heart to heart among the Philistine host, and they fled in dire dismay.

“And the men of Israel . . . pursued the Philistines, and smote them. . . . So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel.” Thus was their victory perfected, their foes all scattered, their sorrow turned to joy and gladness. The Lord had done far more for them than they expected, and they proved in very deed how ready He was to meet and bless His wayward, disobedient people.

Such is His grace—His tender, loving grace. He cannot pass one evil by. If sin be cherished or indulged, He *must* come in and chasten. But let us heartily repent and turn to Him again, and all His grace abounds; His love is stirred to help His feeble ones; the precious blood of Christ removes the guilt,

while His own mighty hand is raised to give deliverance and strength.

We can imagine their joy as, returning from the conflict, they raised their "Ebenezzer," and sang with glad and grateful hearts, "*Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.*" And surely mingled with their praises was many an earnest prayer for strength against their sins, and many a fervent vow to obey and serve the Lord.

The Lord grant it may be so with us, that we may not rest satisfied with the forgiveness of sin (blessed and glorious though that be), but that we may follow after our enemies until they are subdued. Let us bring our sins into the presence of the Lord and search them out there, and, through the precious blood and *living power* of Christ, seek to have them trampled down and overcome.

He is able and willing to do for us far more than He did for Israel, and there is no necessity for us to go on groaning year after year under the power of sin, as Israel did under the Philistine yoke. We may and should get the victory. However strong the sin, the arm of Christ is stronger still; and if in earnestness of soul we cast ourselves on Him, we shall prove that His ear is open to our cry, and His arm stretched out to deliver. Thus shall we also be able to raise our "Ebenezzer," and joyfully declare, like Israel, "*Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.*"

THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT.

IN close proximity to every great truth there lies a danger of some great delusion, from which nothing can save but a single eye. A single eye alone can discern between the real light of the truth, and the false glare of the delusion that lies by its side, and the enemy uses the false light to beguile the steps of the unwary, and to dazzle the eye that is not single. This is peculiarly true of the leadings of the Spirit of the living God.

There are the Father's providential dealings which have a voice to those who can understand them, but there is nothing perhaps we are more ready to misinterpret. There are also the precepts and examples of our Lord, through which He becomes the guide to our feet and the director of our steps, the One who leads His sheep by the still waters, and makes them to lie down in green pastures. But distinct from each of these is the guidance of the Holy Ghost of which Paul writes when he says, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. viii. 14.)

The emblem of this guidance is given to us in the pillar of fire and cloud that went before Israel in all their journeyings in the wilderness, even despite all their rebellions and murmurings; for the gracious God took not away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night from before the people.

This guidance equally with the providential guidance of the Father, and the exemplary and preceptive guidance of the Son, is the portion of every child of God, but it meets him from within and not from without, and acts through the mysterious power of the new life upon the spirit and will.

We must carefully distinguish this operation of the Spirit of God from those miraculous guidings of the Spirit recorded in the New Testament, as when Jesus was driven of the Spirit into the wilderness, or when the Holy Ghost said by some prophetic enunciation "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." These and similar leadings and guidings of the Holy Spirit, were irrespective of inward consciousness, and raised above the promptings of the natural will which in our case necessarily influence and too often unintentionally deceive; for we are ever prone to stamp with the sanction of a divine leading, that which falls in with our own thoughts, plans, and preconceptions.

Thus while gratefully acknowledging that the Spirit

of God does lead, we need carefully to avoid an error contained in a commonly used expression, "I was led," meaning that the Spirit of God led in the matter referred to. If it is thereby implied that the word of God indicated a certain course, that in obedience to it such a course was adopted, it would be unobjectionable; or if in matters beyond our control, we were constrained in the providence of God to take a certain course which there was no legitimate means of avoiding, then we might truly say we were "led." Something, however, very different to this is frequently intended, and therefore we call attention to it.

By using such an expression many would remove from themselves the practical responsibility of a step, and indirectly cast it on Him who is supposed to lead; and this is fraught with danger. It is *we* who act, it is *we* who speak, and therefore the onus rests with us.

As already stated, the Holy Spirit is the only true teaching, ruling, guiding power to the child of God, and His guidance is always in accordance with the word of God, so that when thus taught and led, the believer has bowed down his ear to hear and his heart to obey; and thus has the sweet consciousness of having acted according to the revealed word of God; and in his ways the Spirit of Christ will be manifested.

This is probably what is intended when the apostle writes to the Galatians: "If ye are led (*πνεύματι*) in spirit, *i.e.*, spiritually, ye are not under the law."* What we have particularly to cultivate is this spirituality of mind that will ever lead us into the pathway

* It may be well to observe that all through Galatians v. where in our translation we have "through the Spirit" (v. 5.); "in the Spirit" (v. 16, 25); "of the Spirit" (v. 18); the Greek has simply *πνεύματι* without either an article or a preposition, and standing as it does in v. 17 in contrast to the flesh, I think the spirit of the believer, and not the Holy Spirit of God is intended. In saying this we must remember that as the Spirit of God has quickened our spirit, so the actings of our spirit are not to be separated from the inworking power of the Holy

of obedience; and then it is far safer to speak of having *obeyed*, instead of asserting we have been *led*.

It is especially important for the children of God to avoid all that would tend to throw on God the burden of the course they take. Alas, we are all aware how often in personal as well as in ecclesiastical matters, that which would have been *per se* condemned, has been justified and gloried in, because those who thus acted threw off the responsibility of the action, by vaguely saying they were "led" to it.

Let us not lose sight of the fact that whatever we do, whether good or bad, it is *we* who do it. All moral responsibility rests here. It is not the old man that does the evil, nor is it the new man that does the good. It is I who do it, and it is I who will have to give an account of what I have done in this body, whether it be good or whether it be bad.

Unscriptural expressions commonly cover over an unscriptural idea, and are thus important indications that there may be something wrong where we least suspect it.

When the eye is single, the whole body is full of light. Habitual fellowship with Christ, and a consequent single eye, are the only guarantee that we are under the guidance of the Spirit of truth; and thus, and thus only, will our path be as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

'We cannot judge perfectly as to our singleness of eye: God alone can judge—He alone can estimate; and therefore without laying claim to being led, let us seek to walk in all holiness and meekness, saying with the holy apostle, "I judge not my own self, but He that judgeth me is the Lord."

Ghost. God is "the Father of our spirits" in regeneration as He is the "God of the spirits of all flesh" in creation: but as a rule whenever spirit and flesh are placed antithetically it is our spirit, and not God's that is intended. To the attentive reader of the many passages wherein they are so placed, the importance of this remark will be apparent.

MARY MAGDALENE AT THE SEPULCHRE.

JOHN XX. 1-17.

AMONG the abounding evidences of the loving forethought and gracious provision of our Father for us His children, this specially demands our grateful recognition, that He has given us, through the inspiration of the Spirit of truth, not one only, but four distinct records of the life and ways of the Blessed One who loved us and gave Himself for us. While the soul, lately—or, alas! it may be, long ago—passed' from death to life, is still occupied exclusively or unduly with the matter of its salvation and its own interests, this will be but little felt; but as grace is given to forget the things that are behind, and the preciousness of the Lord Jesus in all His many relations to us His loved ones begins to be apprehended, the heart will awake to a sense of the love of God in providing and preserving for us the four precious gospels. What hidden treasures of unspeakable grace and goodness, what teaching as to our Father's mind, can the Holy Spirit here from day to day unfold to the waiting saint. How green the pastures into which He can here lead, how still the waters beside which He can here cause us to lie down.

Possessing these several divinely-drawn portraitures of the Lord, each perfect in itself down to the smallest detail with respect to the purpose for which it was written, our wisdom is not to endeavour to combine and harmonise, but to mark as most important every divergence, whether apparently small or great, and to seek to learn in simplicity and reverent thankfulness the lesson which it was ordained to teach. All is of our God: all, therefore, abounds with blessing to us. What is repeated in all or any of the gospels is not repeated in vain. The same incidents, the same narratives, the same words, when viewed in the new relation and new aspect in which each evangelist was

moved to relate them, hold forth new instruction to the soul that seeks to be taught of God; verbal distinctions, passed over by the thoughtless Christian as of no consequence, are found to be the depositaries of precious truth when it is searched for as "hid treasure;" and the differences which the wise man of this world, and with him too often the worldly, or weak, or erring Christian, are striving, whether successfully or unsuccessfully, to reconcile before the tribunal of their natural intelligence, do but supply food, and refreshment, and strength, and guidance, to the spirit of the child of God who has been taught in measure the more excellent way of looking up through every letter of the written word to the infinite yet supremely gracious and loving One, who condescends through it to hold communion with the humble, chastened, and childlike heart. Had our Father's purpose been otherwise, we should have had a single gospel as we have one book of Acts.

It is not intended to illustrate these statements now, except in relation to one narrative. The visit of Mary Magdalene to the sepulchre on the morning of the resurrection of the Lord is recorded by the Holy Spirit in all the four evangelists, but with differences most significant and instructive. The wisdom of this world, whether in the natural man or the Christian, has scarcely succeeded to its own satisfaction in determining here the sequence of events to be deduced from the four accounts, and to harmonise with all. How easily could the key have been supplied, how simply could all possibility of a question have been obviated, if this had been the object of the Divine Teacher! But the truth is, that what is needed is not the enlightenment and satisfaction of the intellect, but the engagement of the heart and affections, and the attraction of the new man, with all the emotions and desires of the inner life, to the holy enjoyment of the things of God. When this stage is reached to our blessing,

and to the joy of Him who leads us to it, difficulties, if indeed they can be called difficulties any longer, may be removed. To remove them earlier might be but to supply food to our self-sufficiency, to the flesh, to the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, even when it contemplates the things that are revealed. And so here, as everywhere, the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise.

Let us consider here but one of the points with respect to which the record in the gospel by John is distinguished from the others. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we have Mary Magdalene associated with other women. In Matthew one is named, in Mark two; in Luke two are named, and it is stated that there were others with them. In John, Mary is mentioned alone. Peter and John, indeed, are brought on the scene; but of the other women who were with Mary Magdalene not a word is said. She is separated off from the rest, and the description of her visit is such as might have been given if she had gone alone. Throughout the narrative the spectacle which is here suggested for our contemplation is that of this solitary woman, alone in her sorrow, alone in her blessedness.

What is the instruction here, the special purpose, of our heavenly Instructor? Why is one figure withdrawn from the group, and here presented to us? Is it not in order that we may be helped to learn the actings and the reward of that simple love for the person of the Lord Jesus which now as then is very precious in His sight? Is it not in order that we might study with undivided attention one who exhibited in no usual measure a constraining sense of the love of Christ? A few suggestions on the more prominent features of the history may assist some of the children of God thus to meditate and find blessing.

“The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre.” This

is the opening verse. "Early, when it was yet dark." He whom she ignorantly, but lovingly sought, watched her as she sorrowfully hastened, while others slept, to look again upon His body, for she expected nothing more, and to render such offices of affection as she might. He measures and takes note of the little love that we can show to Him. He marked that she waited not for the day, that "it was yet dark." In Matthew it is said that it had begun to dawn, and this is the force of the original in Luke. In Mark the words are "very early in the morning." In John only, though the time described was probably the same, are we led to think not of the first glimmerings of the dawn, but of the darkness which might have kept back less earnest feet from their errand of love.

On finding the stone rolled away she runs and calls Simon Peter and John. Our first thought may be one of surprise that they should not have gone to the sepulchre before her. Was not the Lord dear to them also? Was not the one the impulsive Peter who had said, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I," who afterwards, when he saw the Lord, "cast himself into the sea" to reach Him? Was not the other the disciple whom Jesus loved? Surely they both had a true and deep love for Him, who had so long been their Friend, and Guide, and Comforter; but there was a deeper and a stronger spring of action in the heart of the poor woman upon whom the Lord had had compassion in her low and despised estate. Peter and John had been called, and pardoned, and blessed, and loved, but out of Mary Magdalene Jesus *had cast seven devils*. To her much had been forgiven: love had in her case met the deepest necessities, and so she loved much. She needed not that any should come and call her. She knew what it was to be delivered when Satan had bound her, and her heart drew her to the place where she believed that He who had saved her might be.

The attention of even the natural man, if he were

not utterly blind and full of enmity as respects the things of the Spirit of God, would be arrested by the evidence of transparent truthfulness which beams from many a touch of nature in what follows. John outran Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. As might have been expected, from the higher spirit of reverence for his Master which characterised him, he only stooped down and looked in, but "*went not in.*" Peter followed, and, under the leading of his ardent nature, "*went into the sepulchre.*" Emboldened by Peter's example "then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw and believed." How different the characters of these two apostles. How different the natural characters of God's children now. Yet our Father can be served and glorified by us all, whatever the mould in which we may have been cast, if the Spirit but rule and bring all into subjection to Him whose we are.

"For as yet they knew not the Scripture that He must rise again from the dead." Long before, He had "begun to show unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed and be raised again the third day." But Peter then "took Him and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee." Again and again had He told them this, and enmity had impressed His words on the minds of His persecutors, who set a watch over his sepulchre, saying, "We remember that that deceiver said while He was yet alive, after three days I will rise again." But the feeble faith of the disciples had not retained them, and the third day found them seeking the living among the dead. Was it not almost always so? Was it not a painful ingredient in that cup of daily sorrow that those dearest to Him so seldom understood Him, that no heart on earth felt with His, that they were slow of heart to believe, their eyes closed and their ears dull? Has

the lesson which this should teach been learned and laid to heart by us, His loved ones, now? He "sympathises" with our "weaknesses" still. (Heb. iv. 15.) Has closeness of communion made us intelligent of His mind? *Do we sympathise with Him?*

"Then the disciples went away again unto their own home." They had not the love that drew Mary to the grave "when it was yet dark," and they had not the love now to stay when she staid. Let us not censure them, but admonished by their failure, ask the Searcher of hearts to try us, and show us what is the measure of our love to Him, who has purchased us with His blood. "*But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping.*" As she came first, so she remained last. And she alone had tears for the Lord.

And now let us note the recompence. "*As she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him. And when she had thus said she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing.*" She alone sees the angels, she alone sees the Lord, and hears His gracious words. Not to Peter, or to the beloved disciple, is given the joy of this first meeting with the Lord, but as another gospel prominently records it, "*He appeared first to Mary Magdalene.*" Passing over all that can put forward any pretension for itself, grace delights to visit and to bless that which is lowest, and weakest, and basest. A precious lesson this to us, if we would have the Lord an abiding inmate of our hearts.

"They have taken away MY LORD." This was the language of simple, childlike appropriation, of a heart to which Christ was everything. And precious must have been its sound in the Saviour's ear. Others had forsaken, rejected, crucified Him; but this poor, deeply

needy one clung to Him as the One whose love had made her altogether His own.

The Lord asks not for some great thing at our hands. He seeks our *hearts*, these guilty, worthless hearts, which it is yet His joy to make fit resting-places for His love—habitations in which He may dwell. Shall we deny Him this joy, and ourselves this blessing of blessings? Oh for more of the spirit of this lowly, heaven-taught woman!

She acted unreasoningly, and made mistakes. Why go to the sepulchre at all? some one might have asked; and why stay there when the body was not there, and the disciples went away? She could have given no answer but that her heart clung to the last resting-place, and to all that remained of Him whom she loved. Like the disciples, she too was expecting to find the body of the Lord, when, if she had listened to His words, she would have been rejoicing in His resurrection. And when she saw Him, so unready was she to welcome Him as risen again, that she mistook Him for the gardener. Yet all is overlooked; for her love was deep and true. And surely it is not so much by our little knowledge and our many mistakes, while lovingly desiring to please Him, as by our coldness of heart, and our little love, that we grieve the Lord.

John and Peter "went away." Had they but waited a very little longer, they too might have seen the Lord. How many a blessed meeting with Him do we miss because we have not love enough to wait but a little while, when He, to test our trust and affection, for a moment withholds Himself from our sight.

She "*saw Jesus, and she knew not that it was Jesus.*" How often, alas! is it so with His dear ones now. It is He; but they know it not. He speaks, He points to the cross, He tells them to take up their cross and follow Him. He says, "It is I; be not afraid;" but He is not recognized. "All these things are against me," mourns God's dear child in unbelief; yet Jesus is

walking before in the narrow, blessed way; and all is ordained by Him. He is there to supply every need, to give every blessing. Even if it be a valley of the shadow of death through which we are led, His rod and His staff they will comfort.

He is "not far from every one of us," but nearest of all to those who are in deepest need,—nearest of all to the soul that mourns for Him—the soul that longeth, yea, fainteth, to have Him near, and can be satisfied with nothing else. "*Woman, why weepest thou?*" It was the falling tear that brought Him. She alone wept for Him; not Peter or John; and the Comforter was there to turn those tears to joy. The same sympathy, the same One to sympathise, is ours, dear chastened, afflicted brother or sister, now. "Another" Comforter He has sent, but He has not withdrawn. "I am with you alway," "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," are His faithful promises still. Still He in His own blessed person—He, the Lord Jesus Himself, who, because He was in all points tempted like as we are, and made perfect through sufferings, can have compassion on the ignorant and wandering; He whispers the needed encouragement in the ear of His suffering saint; He gives the needed strength to bear; He gives His peace, "*the peace of Christ*" (God's word in Col. iii. 15); He gives Himself to be the indweller in the mourner's heart. Oh, for more of the tears of a humble, contrite spirit looking around on a world so appalling, on a church so fallen, and inwards on so much that distresses Him—the tears of a heart happy in nothing but Christ! Oh, for more of this in the place of mere truth, and doctrine, and knowledge, and light-minded acceptance of the precious gift of eternal life, which He has purchased for us with His precious blood! Oh, for more living for Him, walking with Him, dying with Him! more tears for fellowship such as this, that we might better know His nearness, His abiding presence, and the love that waits to wipe all tears away.

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.

“THE kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.”—MATT. xiii. 45, 46.

How unspeakably precious is the church to Christ. Verily *she* is the “pearl of great price,” for which He gave up everything, yea even life itself, that He might buy her for Himself.

She was a lawful captive, the bond-slave of Satan, sold under sin, and nothing short of the precious blood of Christ could redeem her from the lake of fire. The Son of God must die; the holy, harmless, undefiled One must give His life a ransom; the Lord of glory must stoop to bear her shame and woe—or she must be lost for ever.

Oh what love He bare her! oh what a price He paid! It was love for *her* that brought Him from the realms of bliss to be the man of sorrows here. It was for *her* He gave Himself to suffer, bleed, and die: for *her* He endured the cross, and drained the bitter cup of wrath; yes love, intense, immeasurable love, sustained His soul throughout that awful agony. He remembered the prize which would be the award of His suffering. (Heb. xii. 2.) He looked onwards to the time when she would dwell with Him above, all pure and holy, without one spot or stain, *there* to reflect His glory—*there* to delight in Him, and fully respond to His love.

She is His bride, His dove, His love, His only one; the one whom He is forming for Himself, training and making meet for constant fellowship. There, in the highest heaven she will perfectly reflect His image. There she will walk with Him, and be His constant joy, and reign with Him to all eternity.

Oh, what a glorious lot is ours! Well may we trample on the world and all its fancied greatness, and

triumph in our blessed Lord. Union with Christ, eternal, blessed, close companionship with *Him*, the gentle, gracious, loving Jesus; with *Him*, the high and holy King of kings. Who can describe the joy, or who can conceive the bliss?

“Human thought is here confounded,
’Tis far too vast to comprehend.”

She is the darling of His heart, for whom we hear Him pray—“Deliver my darling from the power of the dog;” “rescue my darling from the lions.” In the intensity of His agony, when pouring out His soul an offering for sin, He still remembered her. There she lay enshrined in His affections, the object of His true and fervent love. Verily His love was stronger than death. It was a love which many waters could not quench, neither could the floods drown.

This precious pearl is the elect bride, chosen of the Father for the Son of His love; and when the King shines forth in His glory, the queen will be seen at His side enjoying and reflecting that glory. She is the “riches of the glory of His inheritance,” His own peculiar treasure.

Mark, it is not a necklace of pearls, but *one pearl*, and that a “pearl of great price.” This pearl is composed of *all* true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, for all such are baptized by one Spirit, into one body, to form the bride, the Lamb’s wife, the true Eve, taken out of the second Adam.

Some speak of Christ as “the pearl,” and verily He is a pearl of priceless value; but He cannot be the pearl alluded to in this parable: for how can poor bankrupt sinners purchase Christ? Who indeed does fairly give up everything for Him? And though it is our privilege and duty so to do, yet how could that *purchase* Christ? What could we give that would be in any conceivable measure commensurate with His inestimable worth?

He is God's *gift* to us—His free, His precious gift; and well may we clasp Him to our hearts and rejoice exceedingly that such a gift is ours.

His gift of gifts, all other gifts in one.

Such is His love for us; such is the price He has paid for us; and now what shall we render to Him, or how shall we return His love? He appeals to us so tenderly, and says—"If ye love me, keep my commandments." Oh for more love, more devotedness, more alacrity, in His service, more love to and care for one another! Thus our God and Father would be glorified, and we should enjoy far more of that holy, heavenly fellowship which Christ has obtained for us.

THE CLEANSING OF THE LEPER.

LEVITICUS xiv. 10-32.

PART II.

LET us now follow the cleansed leper on his entering into the tabernacle. On the eighth day—in fact, on the first day of a new week, which typifies the resurrection-day—he was to take two he lambs, and one ewe lamb, also fine flour mingled with oil, and a log of oil. And the priest who was to make him clean had to present him before the Lord.

Do not our souls rise above to that Priest who has made us clean, and who presents us now faultless before God, "holy and without blame before Him in love"? We stand in all the acceptability of Christ to God; and as we approach our God, our only plea is the blood of Christ, the death of Christ, the righteousness of Christ. This is pourtrayed to us in the trespass-offering, the sin-offering, the burnt-offering, and the meat-offering, which were commanded to be offered. May God indeed give unto each of us something of that spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him that we may

enter a little into the teaching of these various aspects of the one Sacrifice of our adorable Lord Jesus Christ!

If our hearts know and love Him, we should delight to trace what He is Godward as well as manward. Faith and love should be followed by spiritual understanding. We should not be as babes only, "unskilful in the word of righteousness," but rather seek to enjoy that "strong meat" that "belongeth to them that are of full age." "In understanding be ye men."

How precious is the thought that our High Priest presents us before the Lord as complete in Himself! Christ Himself is the true antitype of all the offerings which the priest presented. He could say, "Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein;" but "a body hast thou prepared me;" and "we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. . . . For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

The trespass-offering was to be presented first. (vv. 12, 13.) This seems to teach us that the man's personal sins, *his* trespass against God and man, must first be confessed and atoned for. With Isaiah the language of his heart is, "I am a man of unclean lips." *I* am personally unclean and polluted.

An unawakened man will say, "Oh yes, we are all sinners; I know that; but I am not worse than others." But when the Holy Spirit has convinced a man of sin, and in some measure taught him the perfect holiness of God, his *own sin* presses upon his heart and conscience. The trespass-offering leads us at once to HIM, "who His own self bare our *sins* in *His* own body on the tree." "He was wounded for *our* transgressions, He was bruised for *our* iniquities."

As the word of God shows us ourselves, opens out to us that the very "thought of foolishness is sin," and that He who is of "purer eyes than to behold iniquity," has yet known "our thoughts afar off," seen all the

evil, the anger, the vanity, the deceit that dwells within, we do then indeed need to know *Him* as having borne *these* sins, *these* iniquities. When the Accuser whispers in our ear of our vileness and corruptness, not only bringing up all the sins of the past, but the present evil which makes us so unlike that holy God whom we call Father, we need indeed to hear those words very distinctly above all the turmoil within and around, "Come now, and let us reason together . . . though *your* sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool;" and also to know *daily* the preciousness of that blood that "cleanses from all sin."

To meet this felt need in the leper the blood of the trespass-offering was applied to his ear, hand, and foot (v. 14), as if to show him that sins of thought, of even listening to evil, sins of act which his hands had committed, and the defilement incurred in walking through this corrupt world, *all* was now cleansed, purged—the blood had put it away. Thus would our loving God comfort the heart of each sorrowing believer who, having a conscience enlightened and exercised before Him, sees sin where once he suspected it not, and grieves that he is still so bad and walks so unworthily of his calling. How sweetly then does the word speak to his heart—"If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins."

But with the knowledge of sins thus forgiven, what solemn responsibility presses upon the soul to keep itself "unspotted from the world." How earnest becomes the desire to live to Him who bought us at such a price! to glorify Him both in "body and in spirit."

This responsibility is in no way soothing, but rather the reverse; hence the cleansed leper was not merely shown that defilement was put away, but at once the priest takes of the oil, "pours it into his left hand,

sprinkles it seven times before the Lord," and then applies it to the ear, hand, and foot, "upon the blood of the trespass-offering," and the remnant of the oil is poured upon the head of him that is to be cleansed; thus beautifully typifying that oil of grace, that anointing of the Holy Ghost, that "unction from the Holy One," which gives power to obey and serve the Lord.

Wherever the blood has been applied through faith in the Lord Jesus, there follows this blessed gift of the Holy Ghost. Did our ear but recall the rich promises of our God, and the abundant grace which is always ready to supply *all* our need, and did we then entreat that this anointing might daily renew our strength afresh, comfort our hearts, and give us power over evil, how different would be our walk! With what energy should we run "in the way of His commandments"! How firmly should we plant our feet in the narrow path, ever pressing toward the mark, patiently running the race set before us, not "turning to the right hand nor to the left." With our "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," no roughness of the road would deter us, but manfully should we "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," and fight the battles of the Lord. Our hands, once so ready to do our own will, but now consecrated to His service, would be ever ready to every good work, thinking no service too small, too insignificant, if the Master but seek it from us, and no effort too great, because we might reckon on a strength not our own.

What holy care also should we manifest to separate ourselves from all evil; to guard the entrance, as it were, to the heart; not to *listen* even to evil, but to give ear to what is good; to "take heed *how* we hear," and "what we hear;" and all this not from fear or slavish dread of offending an awful judge, but with hearts rejoicing in His love, remembering that the holy anointing of our God is upon us. With the "oil of gladness" upon our head, we might "serve Him with-

out fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life."

May that solemn warning sink into our hearts—"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption;" and, "If we live (or are alive) in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

But to return to our chapter. When the cleansed leper had thus learnt that his own defilement had been put away by the blood of the trespass-offering, and his heart had been comforted by the love and grace which the oil signified, then the priest was to offer the sin-offering (v. 19); as if now, being fully conscious of God's forgiveness and acceptance of himself personally, he was able to look around and confess, not merely that he had *trespassed*, but that his very nature was corrupt, that he belonged to a sinful race, "a people of unclean lips," and that as a child of Adam he needed atonement.

Thus the believer, being convinced of the utter depravity of the human race, knowing himself to be a sinner in a sinful world, turns with adoring love and gratitude to the cross of God's well-beloved Son, who "appeared to put away *sin* by the sacrifice of Himself," and with John the Baptist exclaims, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh (*margin*, beareth) away the sin of the world."

The atonement has been made; God's perfect righteousness has been satisfied; His beloved Son has borne the punishment that sin deserved. "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin;" and though it is utterly beyond our power to understand *how* sin was imputed to this spotless Holy One, we rest on God's blessed word, and adore the wonderful grace and wisdom whereby we can be "made the righteousness of God in Him."

Then follows the burnt-offering; and we may well meditate on the perfect righteousness of our great

sacrifice, who "offered Himself without spot to God," "a lamb without blemish;" who in His perfection as the Holy One, the immaculate Son of God, "hath given HIMSELF for us an offering and a sacrifice to God "for a sweet-smelling savour." Yes, God "smelled a sweet savour," "a savour of rest." (Gen. viii. 21, *margin*.) His holiness, His justice, could rest in the perfect satisfaction thus offered. He could say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And thus the holy God has devised and provided a channel by which He can pour His love on the sinner, who, owning his own guiltiness, pleads the value of that one sacrifice, sufficient for the sin of the world.

The burnt-offering was presented wholly to God, and accompanied by the meat-offering, which was commanded to be of fine flour, mingled with oil and frankincense. A handful of the fine flour, with *all* the frankincense, was to be burnt for a memorial upon the altar, "an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord;" but the remnant of the meat-offering was for Aaron and his sons.

Surely this presents to us the sweet savour of *a life* holy and acceptable to God—one walking in favour with God, who could say, "I do always those things that please Him." While His life, in all the sweet savour of its perfect obedience, its unstained purity, could only be appreciated by that Almighty God whom He came to manifest (like the sweet frankincense which was *wholly* the Lord's); still we may feed our souls on this wonderful exhibition of love and grace, and remember that He has left us "an example, that we should follow His steps."

As we thus retrace the services enjoined for the cleansing of the leper, we see how God expected of him a gradual progress or advance of intelligence in His ways. From the beginning of the week, when God had pronounced him clean by the sprinkling of the blood of the slain bird, and the escape of the living

one, he had been learning deeper lessons of the need of cleansing himself and his ways, and gaining a higher and deeper estimate of the enormity of sin in God's sight, which required such sacrifices to put it away. But as he realized something of God's satisfaction in what these sacrifices shadowed forth, what solid peace must have possessed his soul, as well as adoring love and devotion to the God who had not only healed him of his leprosy, but thus found a way to bring him into such near and holy communion with Himself.

The child of God who meditates on this wonderful picture can well utter that beautiful doxology—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

May we also gain a deeper estimate of the value of the wondrous expiation which God has provided!

Yet, failing in this, what tenderness and compassion our loving God has for the ignorance or poverty of His people! for we also read of the provision made in case the man "be poor," or "cannot get so much." (v. 21.) He was then permitted to bring one lamb for a trespass-offering, with its meat-offering, and two turtle doves, or two young pigeons, such as he was able to get, for a sin-offering and a burnt-offering.

So now, if any child of God, through weakness or infirmity, feels unable to enter into the fuller and more ample views of the cross of Christ which the intelligent believer delights in, and desires to have intensified, still there is provision in God's manifold grace for this felt weakness and poverty. It is not *our* appreciation of the sacrifice, but God's estimation of it, that brings peace and safety.

God is well satisfied with His beloved Son. May our hearts rest and be satisfied in Him also, and may we daily "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

THE CHURCH OF SMYRNA.

REV. II. 8-10.

THE Church of Smyrna was suffering much from poverty, persecution, and oppression. They were cast down and discouraged because of the way, and needed the strong wine of God's grace to revive and cheer them. Their hearts were sad and weary, and the deep pity and compassion of their blessed Lord flowed out to them in stimulating words of comfort and encouragement.

Who is so able or mighty to revive the fainting spirit as our sympathizing great High Priest—that gracious gentle One who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and ready to succour all that are tempted? What may we not expect from HIM in times of grief or sadness? How well He knows the way to dry the mourner's tears, and make the widow sing for joy. "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." He "upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all that are bowed down."

We see Him at the grave of Lazarus, groaning in bitterness of spirit because of the sisters' sorrow, mingling His tears with theirs, and then doing far beyond their utmost hopes, causing them indeed to cease from their sorrow, and turning their grief into songs of praise.

Such is He still. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." It is part of His blessed glorious work to "comfort all that mourn." He is anointed, and seated at the right hand of God for this

very purpose, and how blessed it is to look up and see HIM there, waiting to wipe away our tears, to give us the "oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

Ah! who can tell the fulness of that blessed heart? the deep and tender pity which is ever welling up? the streams of love and grace which are ever flowing forth?

We know something of Him as the Saviour of the lost. We have learnt a little of the exceeding preciousness of His sin-cleansing blood. We worship and adore Him as King of kings and Lord of glory. We look onwards longingly to the time when He will come and receive us to Himself; but what have we learnt of His deep and wondrous sympathy? And yet we *need it all*. The road is still rough and thorny, the trials great and many, the burdens very heavy, and we grow faint and weary. We *need* His soul-reviving word to cheer us on our way. We *need* His arm to lean upon, His mighty hand to hold us up. We *need* His love, His sympathy to calm and satisfy our souls, the sunshine of His presence to scatter all our fears.

Why is it that we are often sad, so often heavy laden? Because we do not cleave to Jesus, but strive to drag along alone. We do not trust His love, nor fairly cast our cares upon Him. We try to carry our own weights, instead of leaning upon Him; we suffer hard and unbelieving thoughts to come between our souls and Him—our Lord and Saviour.

Ah! did we know Him better, we should not treat Him thus. We do not give Him credit for His deep, unwearying sympathy. We little know how ready is His mighty arm to give the needed help—to soothe our pain, to shelter us beneath His wing, or hide us in the secret of His presence—there to revive and feast our souls, to show us all is well, and cheer us to the race again.

It is very blessed to note the way in which the Lord Jesus presents Himself to this tried and afflicted church. He does not speak of "eyes as a flame of fire," or "feet like shining brass," but presents Himself to them under the grand and majestic title—"I am the First and the Last:" the Creator and Sustainer of all things, who orders all things according to His own will.

Thus would He turn their eye away from the persons and circumstances which oppressed them, and lead them to look up to HIM, to see Him seated on His throne ruling over all. Not even a dog could move its tongue against any of the children of Israel, when He brought them forth out of Egypt, without *His* permission, and how much less could a human tongue or a human hand be raised to injure them, unless it were His will concerning them? "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?"

He would thus strengthen their faith. True, they were in the furnace, but He was sitting by as the refiner, to purge, and to purify, and to make them bright. He would take care the fire did not hurt them: and all their sufferings, however bitter they might be, should end in a richer, fuller song of gratitude, and be crowned with His eternal recompence.

Could we but remember this when in trial, how differently we should speak and act. He is the "First and the Last"—the *one* and *only* mover in all that happens to us. Other hands and tongues may be used, but they only carry out His purposes concerning us.

He has chosen us in the furnace of affliction. We are in His school to be trained, and the special lessons we have to learn are obedience and faithfulness to Him, and meekness, patience, gentleness, and long-suffering to all around. We cannot learn these lessons by hear-say. They must be inwrought and manifested, and hence the needs-be of manifold temptations.

These temptations are *not* pleasant. They are very grievous to flesh and blood. They often *seem* to do us harm, because they bring out the evil which is in us. They are like the furnace to the silver, which brings to the surface the dross which was mingled with it. They do not *produce* the evil, but only reveal it to us; and if we are wise in God's wisdom, instead of *excusing* the sin which has been thus detected, we shall so truly confess and judge it before the Lord, that it will not only be forgiven, but also in measure be subdued and overcome. Thus some of our dross will be removed, the furnace will effect its appointed end, and we shall come forth as vessels more meet for the Master's use.

Thus an unkind word or a burst of temper—though sin in the one who yields to it—is God's furnace to us, to test our meekness. If it produce a retort on our part, it should lead to deep humbling before our God: if, on the other hand, we bear it meekly and patiently, it is fruit which will abound to our account; and thus the trial of our faith, though it be tried with fire, is exceeding precious, and will be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Every trial, and even the sin of others, may thus be turned to account, and become a means of rich blessing to our own souls.

Again, pain and sickness is a furnace to test our patience and submission to the will of God, and is meant to purge away the impatience and irritability of our nature. The process may be long, and the furnace may be seven times heated, but let us understand our Father's will in it, and be satisfied to have all our dross consumed, to let patience have its perfect work, that we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Nor is this all, for while we are in the furnace *He* feels most deeply and keenly for us. He knows our griefs, He counts our tears, He heeds our every groan. There is no hardness in *HIM*, no calm indifference to our pain; but with the deepest, tenderest pity He

seeks to soothe and sympathize, to speak the cheering word, to calm the troubled heart, and still the rising sigh. Ah! well He knows the way to raise the soul above its woe, and make it sing for joy, though passing through the fires.

HE IS THE FIRST AND THE LAST. Does persecution press us down? Are we oppressed and scorned because we follow Him? It is *His gift* to us—a special favour from His hand. “Rejoice,” He says, “and be exceeding glad . . . for great is your reward in heaven.” Let us be firm and stedfast, and humbly do His will, and HE will crown us in a day to come.

Let us seek thus to look up amid all our trials and difficulties, and see HIM as “the First and the Last,” the orderer and arranger of all that concerns us, and then, instead of murmuring at others, or being occupied with second causes, we shall see no hand but His; and thus, while striving to learn the lesson which He would teach, we shall be able to submit cheerfully to His will, well knowing that *all* He does is in love. So shall we be more than conquerors over all our circumstances, whether pleasant or otherwise, and be able to give “thanks always for all things.”

But more than this, the Lord Jesus speaks of Himself as He “which was dead and is alive.” He reminds them that He well knows what suffering is, that He had suffered even the death of the cross *for them*, and would they not willingly suffer a little while for Him? He thus appeals to their affection and gratitude. He alludes to His death of agony and shame — and would they refuse to follow in His steps?

Still more, He is *alive* again, crowned with glory and honour, the reward of His sufferings here; and if *they* suffer for Him, *they* shall also reign with Him. He had trod the path before them, and having reached the goal, He holds out the crown to them and urges them to run on with patience.

“Alive again.” Alive — watching you in the race;

alive—to give you all needed help; alive—as the mighty Conqueror of all your foes; alive—to receive and crown you at the end of your course. What words could be more calculated to revive and strengthen them? Blessed, blessed Jesus, how well Thou knowest the human heart, and how ready and able Thou art to satisfy its utmost cravings!

But listen again to His gracious words: “I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (*but thou art rich*).” Rich—though they knew it not; rich—in obedience and faithfulness to Him; rich—in their sufferings for His sake: blessed, enduring substance this—treasure laid up in heaven. Men might have called them poor, and great may have been their straits, but *He* knew their works, *He* knew their trials, and great was their reward in heaven.

He heard also the blasphemy of those who said they were Jews, but were not, but were the synagogue of Satan. An awful title indeed, but such Christ calls the false professors, the mere imitators of God’s truth; and such are always the hinderers and opposers of real godliness. *He* heard it all: the bitter taunts, the false accusations, the subtle wiles, by which they sought to daunt or turn these faithful ones aside. He knew it all, and joyed to see their stedfast, humble walk.

May it be so with us. Let us seek to be rich towards God, to lay up treasure in heaven, and so to cleave to and obey the word of God, that we may be able to discern and resist all the deceivableness of unrighteousness. If Satan cannot lead us into worldliness or sin, he will try another plan, and seek by cunning craftiness and perversion of the very truth of God, to lead us astray from Christ. Our only safety is in God and the word of His grace. “To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

Then follows the precious exhortation—“Fear none

of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days." He tells them of the coming trouble, but assures them it is measured.

It may be the devil's hand that casts them into prison, but they are the Lord's prisoners, put there by Him to have their dross consumed. His prisoners, whom He will visit, and refresh, and bless; shut up *with* Him that they may learn to know Him better. His prisoners—that they might learn to sing as was once sung—

"A little bird I am,
Shut from the fields of air;
And here I sit and sing
To Him who placed me here.

"My cage confines me round,
Abroad I cannot fly;
My prison walls cannot control
The flight, the freedom of my soul.

"I sing the whole day long;
Naught have I else to do:
And He who caught and bound my wing
Delights to hear me as I sing."

Thus sang one who was shut up by man as a prisoner. She well knew what it was to be the Lord's prisoner, and thus sought to wile away the tedious hours; and surely this was music which must have filled heaven's courts with gladness—music most melodious in the ear of Christ. Surely, surely, His presence and His smile can cheer the darkest dungeon, and make the prisoner forget his chains.

"Ye shall have tribulation ten days." The time is measured out and fixed by Him, and so were the sufferings. No chance can intervene. No power can stay His hand. He sits as Sovereign, though it seem not so. They were suffering for His sake, and might well rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great would be their recompence. What need they fear when He de-

clares—“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life;” and again, “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”

Well might they be faithful, for what was death to them? What but a friendly hand? Its sting was gone; their sins were cancelled, and heaven and glory lay before them. The death of the body—ah! what is that compared to the second death, the lake of fire and brimstone? The Lord had said that *it* should not hurt them, and the language of each heart might be—

“There is no condemnation,
There is no hell for me;
The torment and the fire
Mine eye shall never see.”

And then the promise—the cheering, invigorating promise—“I will give thee a crown of life.” A crown from the hand of Jesus Himself. A crown as the token of the joy they had given Him. A crown as the mark of His fond approval. A crown of life, too, as the eternal remembrance that they had been faithful unto death.

How precious will be those crowns. How precious as *His* gift, *His* reward, *His* eternal memento of our obedience here. With what gratitude and joy shall we cast them at His feet, and own with full and overflowing hearts, that HE IS WORTHY—HE ALONE.

Oh! may His tender, loving sympathy revive our souls, and lead us to far more enduring faithfulness and obedience to Him.

“CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER.”

“Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.”

HEBREWS x. 24.

HAVE we ever taken this brief apostolic exhortation into the closet and pondered over it in the Master’s presence? It will soon bring us to our knees in heart-felt confession of daily, hourly shortcoming; of oppor-

tunities neglected times without number; of coldness and carelessness of spirit; of selfish motives, half-confessed jealousies, which have been allowed to come between us and the free, happy, discharge of our duty towards our brethren.

Ah, who will dare to reckon up openly on paper all that we shall find to bewail? God grant it may not be to bewail only, for few things stunt spiritual growth more surely than barren confession; nor to pore over in that faithless despondency which gives Satan his favourite moment of assault against a child of God. Let us rather say with David, "I will declare mine iniquity, I will be sorry for my sin;" and then in Christ's name let us come boldly unto the throne of grace,—there how surely to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Shall we read the verse again? "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." "Consider" is a suggestive word. Does it not imply a patient, thorough examination of each particular case, a taking into account of the position, qualifications, and circumstances of each brother and sister; no mere passing thought, suggested it may be by a meeting in the street or an hour's social intercourse, but a loving, individual interest, springing from a deeper, surer source than any human friendship?

That other word also, "provoke." How explicit it is. How often we hear the expression, "If such a person persists in such a course of conduct, I shall be provoked into doing so and so." Gradually brought up to the point by a steady series of attacks, small it may be in themselves, but more effectual by far than one or two fierce onslaughts, and more lasting too as to the result—once fairly provoked, we all know how easily irritation can be kept up, how a word, or look, can rouse the apparently smouldering flame; and how difficult it is to put out the fire which had taken long to kindle. Is not this also true as regards the

“provoking” here spoken of,—this *better* provoking “to love and good works,” which we Christians are so apt to neglect, while our proneness to the other too often brings such grievous reproach on the cause of Christ?

We know how gifts differ. In 1 Cor. xii., which we must study and bear constantly in mind if we would wisely “consider” our brethren, this truth is vividly portrayed.

It is quite possible to provoke another to undertake work for which he is totally unfitted, on the plea that the need is great; but it would be far better left undone, than that by ill-judged urgency the wrong person should be induced to manage or mismanage it, while the right person stands unemployed, or, it may be, is set to the very business which really belongs to the other. Are we not sometimes over-anxious, over-eager in these matters? Do we realize that the work committed to the church is Christ’s work, that we are His members, and that time spent in seeking to know His will regarding work, will prove never to have been lost, but emphatically gained?

We all know the difference between doing work because we think it has to be done, and doing work for which we reverently believe we have a commission from our Head. In one case we have to hold on, wearily and painfully to our task; in the other our task holds on to us, and amid the weakness of the flesh and sore besetments of the spirit, perhaps, because of our own unbelief, there is light on our path. Unprofitable servants as we are, we feel the eye of our Master following us and we are strong to face everything for His sake.

Let us then be very careful, very watchful, that in striving “to provoke one another to love and to good works,” we may do so according to the mind of the Spirit. But this is only a passing caution; for practically there is far more harm done in the church by omission than by commission.

We will now seek to illustrate the apostle's meaning in the words "consider" and "provoke."

Persons of a certain disposition find a peculiar difficulty in *beginning* an undertaking. If the first sod be cut, the first step hewn in the rock, they will often follow on with a determination which is a thorough contrast to their previous inertness or trepidation. We know how to deal with such persons in worldly affairs, but have we been as careful to "consider" them spiritually as brotherly love requires?

It may be a brother or sister who has reached middle age, in easy circumstances and with a certain amount of leisure, and yet they never visit the poor, never care for the young; and if the question were asked, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" no one would expect them to answer, "Here am I, Lord, send me." And yet, brethren, rather than turn upbraiding eyes on these dumb and timid ones, let us pause and ask ourselves this searching question, Have we "considered" them in the past? are we "considering" them now? considering them with tender, loving reference to their peculiar case?

Silence is not always death, nor even sleep. Under these speechless, passive exteriors there are often hearts yearning even to pain for the power of expression; cramped energies that long to be made use of; humble spirits that would willingly sit at the feet of the youngest disciple that could teach them how to set about any of the tasks which they would so gladly perform if they fancied themselves fitted for the work. Who will cut the first sod? who will carve out the first step and start them in their labour? Left to themselves, they will do nothing; kindly "considered," gently "provoked," "the love and the good works" will be sure to follow, though it may be slowly, with pauses of doubt and indecision, as Satan strives to paralyze the wakening powers and discourage the diffident spirit.

Take another case where circumstances rather than natural temperament form the danger. Have we ever known a young believer embedded, so to speak, in a family where conventional religion is so respectably maintained, that departure from any of the household traditions on the subject of dress, behaviour, companionship, occupation—anything, in short—involves universal reprobation and unhesitating expostulation, and this latter in terms so like the truth, with arguments apparently so based on Scripture as sorely to perplex the timid and inexperienced disciple?

The Master's voice calls in one direction; but there are loud negatives—now from one point, now from another, and, longing to do right, yet fearing to do wrong, the young Christian stands bewildered and uncertain. “I am left alone, and they seek my life,” is often the desolate cry of many who are apparently surrounded by the brightest and happiest circumstances. But God seeth not as man seeth; and if we are in close communion with Christ, the keen insight of sympathy with His members that springs from such nearness will prompt us wisely to “consider” the harassed and isolated mourner. Grace will be given to hold out a helping hand at the fitting time, to speak a word of cheer, to lend countenance at a critical moment, to “provoke” unto faith and courage and meekness, “to love and to good works;” and the result, with God's blessing, will be a sustained and steady testimony, bringing all the more glory to the Lord because of the adverse surroundings.

But we need not multiply instances. Rather let us earnestly ask—How can we best “consider,” how most efficiently “provoke” our brethren? How rouse the supine; encourage the timid; regulate, without damping, the zeal of the impetuous; train fitful impulse into steady activity? As the list grows, does not the question force itself on the mind—“Who is sufficient for these things?” And how cheering and encourag-

ing is the Apostle's response, so humble and yet so undaunted—"Our sufficiency is of God," and "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

As Christians we are called on thus to consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. But, brethren, is there not amongst us a tendency to consider one another with very different results, if not intentions? How else is it that we pray so earnestly for the Spirit of God to work, and yet look so coldly on any brother who breaks through the dead-level routine, and in any way acts up to the Bible standard of faith or devotedness?

It is true we may not ourselves be called to the same work; it may to our thinking be unusual, not carried on in the wisest and most approved manner; nay, we may even be doubtful whether any good will result—yet, is it well, is it brotherly, is it Christian, to act as we often do? Is it right to stand aside, at the best, in a strictly non-committed attitude—oftener with open disapproval and remonstrance—oftenest, and, oh, worst of all! with half-expressed doubts, cautions, hints at the perils of over-zeal, the danger of troubling weak brethren, the great responsibility incurred by those who begin movements which perhaps they will never be able to carry out?

Like a hundred trifling wounds, these in the aggregate are as deadly as a stab in the most vital part, draining the very life-blood of hope and resolve, or weakening energies, and taking up time that might otherwise have been spent on the foe. And why should this reproach rest on us? Can we not "love as brethren?" Can we not "be pitiful, be courteous?" "There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." Let us fairly accept this truth, and it will clear away many difficulties from our path, and from that of others also.

We cannot be too vigilant as to doctrine—too tolerant in dealing with one another as to the manner of

living out the life of faith. Let us beware of narrowness of spirit, of that tendency, inherent in all natures, to set up a standard of our own, and condemn everything that exceeds or falls short of its exact proportions.

Brethren, what if we judged one another less, and prayed more one for the other? Instead of canvassing motives, criticising actions, and exchanging prophecies of evil when a brother ventures to disturb the accustomed order of things, what if we bore him on our hearts before the throne of grace, craving a rich blessing on his labours, and for ourselves loving, unselfish, catholic spirits to joy in his joy, if it were given him to gather in many sheaves for the Master, though his way of reaping might not be just our way?

What a salutary and yet humbling discovery it would be, if in answer to our prayers we were shewn how much of self has been mingled with our anxiety for the cautious stepping of our companions; and how, in striving to keep or bring all to what we regard as a safe and wise course, we have haply been found unconsciously even fighting against God. “Quench not the Spirit” is an injunction for the present day as well as for apostolic times.

It is undoubtedly necessary sometimes to strive to regulate hasty movements, and direct inexperienced activity; but how humbly, prayerfully, and tenderly such a work should be undertaken, so that instead of the bonds of love being frayed asunder they may be drawn all the closer, and needless pain avoided to all concerned.

Let us in our closets faithfully, lovingly, perseveringly, “consider” our fellow-disciples, and the blessed Lord Himself will teach us the wisest and surest way “to provoke” them “to love and to good works.”

“O Lord, with sorrow and with shame,
 We meekly would confess
 How little we who bear thy name,
 Thy mind, thy ways express.”

WHAT IS MY WORK TO-DAY?

To search for truth and wisdom,
 To live for Christ alone,
 To run my race unburdened,
 The goal my Father's throne;
 To view by faith the promise,
 While earthly hopes decay;
 To serve the Lord with gladness—
 This is my work to-day.

To shun the world's allurements,
 To bear my cross therein,
 To turn from all temptation,
 To conquer every sin;
 To linger, calm and patient,
 Where duty bids me stay,
 To go where God may lead me—
 This is my work to-day.

To keep my troth unshaken,
 Though others may deceive,
 To give with willing pleasure,
 Or still with joy receive;
 To bring the mourner comfort,
 To wipe sad tears away;
 To help the timid doubter—
 This is my work to-day.

To bear another's weakness,
 To soothe another's pain;
 To cheer the heart repentant,
 And to forgive again;
 To commune with the thoughtful,
 To guide the young and gay;
 To profit all in season—
 This is my work to-day.

I think not of to-morrow,
 Its trial or its task;
 But still, with childlike spirit,
 For present mercies ask.
 With each returning morning,
 I cast old things away;
 Life's journey lies before me,
 My prayer is for *to-day*.