

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 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.

ANOTHER YEAR.

SHOULD the God of all grace allow the *Golden Lamp* again to shed its feeble ray on the surrounding darkness, another year will have closed over you, dear reader, and a new one will have commenced its course. Exhortations, admonitions, and solemn warnings, drawn from the rapidity of the flight of time, from its irrevocability and its momentous relation to eternity, are at this season earnestly pressed on the consideration of the perishing multitudes around us. And may not *we*, too—we, who would strive to win the careless, the ungodly, and the self-deceived, to serious thought of present duty, and of the imminent future—may not we, too, with exceeding profit, withdraw for awhile, and with befitting solemnity, into the presence of God, and there seek faithfully to ascertain what has been the record of the past year with respect to ourselves, and what are the lessons to be gathered up from its experiences for our walk during so much as may be given to us of the year on which we are entering?

We have been blessed, dear brethren in the Lord, with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. We have been loved by Him who is Love, with an unspeakable love, before the foundation of the world, delivered by Him from this present evil age, and adopted into the holy, blessed family of His beloved children. Our sins have been forgiven; we have, as a present and unchangeable possession, peace with

God ; none can pluck us out of his Almighty hand, and none can lay anything to our charge. This is our present standing—the standing of every child of God—God's own accomplished work in every guilt-laden sinner brought nigh to Him, and reconciled through the precious blood of Christ.

And as the one sacrifice once offered has thus perfected us for ever in the perfect righteousness of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, so has all provision been made to meet every need of each one of us throughout our pilgrimage in this wilderness down to the end. There is the never-failing manna, daily and sufficient for the day, all the journey through ; there is the living water from the rock that follows us, and that rock is Christ ; there is chastening for our profit, and trial from day to day appointed and weighed out by Infinite wisdom and Infinite love, that our faith may grow ; and there is tender watchfulness that the trial shall never exceed our strength, and in every trial the precious sympathy of Him who trod this path of fruitful suffering before us, that He might be the Captain of our salvation. He who *died* to save us, ever *lives* to make intercession for us.

Wherefore, then, brethren, all this satisfying provision—all this rich endowment ? For what object is it that we have been once for all delivered and brought so near at such a cost, and that Omnipotence is engaged to let us, while journeying to our inheritance, want no good thing ? Primarily and ultimately that the heart of the gracious God may be filled with joy over us, as the heart of an infinite loving Father over the long lost but rescued prodigal ; but secondly, and for the effecting of this ultimate purpose, in order that we might so live as to be to the praise of the glory of His grace.

We are all children ; we have all been loved with an everlasting love, but we individually give joy to God only so far as He sees the abundant grace bestowed

upon us effectual to the bringing forth in us of fruit which shall be to his praise. We are saved in order that we may live to God: we have been chosen in Christ in order that we may be *holy* and *without blame* before Him in love: we have been gifted and empowered in order that we may *adorn* the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things: we have been equipped with the whole armour of God that we may, as faithful soldiers, fight the good fight of faith: we have been made one with Christ by his Spirit dwelling in us, in order that we might be able, in our daily walk and conversation, *to follow Christ*.

Our slothful, deceitful hearts willingly ignore and forget this. It is enough, they would suggest, that He has died for us; it is enough that we have all that He can give; it is enough to have received and to be ever receiving without a thought of the greater blessing of giving again to Him who yearns to see each loved and reconciled child living to give joy to Him, to render Him all the return that we can; to be in body, soul, and spirit wholly His.

Brethren, our failure here has been grievous indeed. We live as if salvation were the end and goal of all our thoughts, and desires, and energies, instead of being, as it truly is, the beginning, the source and spring, and fountain of a new and heavenly life, to be advanced and developed daily by the power of the Holy Ghost, and an earnest, waiting, watchful attitude of soul on our part, through the stages of infancy and childhood till it reaches the measure of the stature of the full grown man. We seem to have little consciousness that the calling of the saved one is *to please God*, to be *a follower of God*, and so *to walk* that as our joy abounds through what our Father has done for us, so His heart may now be filled with joy through that which (worthless utterly though it be in itself) we lovingly, and constrained by growing acquaintance with His love, strive to be ever doing for Him.

The departure of another year, and the dawning upon us of a new one, fittingly invite reflection, and seem with a loud voice to interrogate us as to the use made of the time that has passed, and of our purpose with respect to that which may remain to each one of us. He who ordained these earthly times and seasons, so rapidly being left behind as we journey on to eternity, designed in his goodness that it should be so. It is a part of his gracious council that they should thus be made helps to us. What then of *our growth*? This is the all-important consideration for *the children of God*. To the unsaved, God puts a different question, but, for the present, "What have we to do with them that are without? Them that are without, God judgeth." And the admonition to us is to "judge ourselves," that we may "not be judged."

Are we then *growing*—WE, dear *sons and daughters of the living God*? Are we growing? Am I? Are you, dear reader? Are we forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before? Are we pressing toward the mark for *the prize*? Are we in Paul's company in this matter, or have we cast in our lot under some different leader? Can we say, "This one thing I do?" Are we warring as good soldiers to please Him who has enlisted us? Are we using the time—redeeming it—as the provident and trustful husbandman who bears in mind that the one *who labours* shall be the *first partaker* of the fruits?

Or does the new year find us spiritually as the last, and has a year of patient love and unwearied mercies on the part of our God passed over us unused and unblest? It may be so, and that not with the humble, contrite soul that trembles at God's word, but where unheeding confidence is greatest, and the willingness to ask God to search and try the heart is least. The caution is, "Take heed, *brethren*, lest there be in *any of you* an evil heart of unbelief"—"lest any of you

be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Full and free indeed is the Gospel which may be heard on all sides in these days ; but is there not with this a grave shortcoming in the apprehension and statement of the responsibility of those whom that Gospel embraces? We have eternal life, thanks be to God, but it may be choked, and so remain unfruitful, and Satan is surrounding us in these last days with all that his wisdom and malice can devise to keep God unhonoured by his child, if he cannot keep the sinner from the love of God. Before men and angels and this forbearing God, there may too easily be presented by any of us, even when years have passed since He breathed into us the breath of spiritual life, the solemn spectacle of a babe ungrown, with senses not exercised by reason of use in the things of God, and with little ability—though for the time there should have been much—to walk worthy of Him who has called us to his kingdom and glory.

It is not by knowledge, even of the things of God, that we can test ourselves. This is a day of knowledge. We may "understand all mysteries and all knowledge" and be wanting in the sole source of all acceptable offering to Him—*love*. As little can energy in doing be applied as a test ; for though work, earnest work, may be of God and for God, it may, whatever the sphere or field in which it is manifested, proceed chiefly, or even solely, from the restless activity and self-seeking of the old man, which God would have us to be crucifying. **DO WE LOVE GOD?** This is the test. Has our love for Him increased since the last year of blessings began its course, through the sure experience of each one of us of the goodness and mercy that have followed us along every step throughout it? **And are we MORE LIKE CHRIST?** Have we been transformed somewhat more into the same image—the image of the meek, holy, faithful, obedient, loving Lord Jesus—by all the gracious discipline expended on us during another year in the school of God? We

know Christ *for* us: what of Christ *in* us? Is more of the "epistle of Christ" manifested in us? "My little children," Paul wrote to the *believers* of Galatia, "of whom I travail in birth *again* until CHRIST BE FORMED IN YOU." What know we who are born again of *this further birth*?

If any humbled spirit is led to give a sorrowful answer to these enquiries, let the voice of the tender, pitying Father to His penitent child be recognised, and let the new year begin in entire consecration to Him whose strength is made perfect in weakness, and who will never leave us or forsake us. Trial and conflict we shall have till the day shall come when the Canaanite shall no longer dwell in the land, but according to our faith—according as we hang in utter helplessness upon our all-sufficient God—we shall have strength and grace to avoid the unfaithfulness of the past, to stand abidingly under the eye of God, and to bring forth fruit as we go on our way rejoicing.

Surely to all of us this is His call—"Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Before each one of us, the highest, the lowest, the weak and the strong, there is a pre-appointed path of service lying open, in which, if we enter on it, God will be honoured, and we shall be blessed. He waits to point out to each one our allotted task. He alone can show it, and He surely will. He has work for all. He gives us all the blessedness of fellowship with Himself, and calls us to be fellow-workers. The path will probably be one which we should not have chosen for ourselves, to yield ourselves up, it may be, to chastening, to deny self, to take up our cross, to go forth to Christ without the camp, bearing His reproach,—while we should have preferred to do some great thing, to be active, to be prominent. Let it satisfy us to sit still and know that He is God, to sit at Jesus' feet, to wait to hear His voice, and to do, or suffer, as He may appoint.

By how many, and by what powerful motives does God appeal to us to be faithful!

“*The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died; and that He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.*” Brethren, have we thus judged, and if so, are we acting on this judgment?

Love to the Church, to the children of God, should constrain us. How greatly in the midst of ruin, worldliness, ignorance, disobedience, and unfaithfulness, they need all the help that we can give—the help especially of the testimony of a Christ-like walk. In no way can we be such centres of blessing to them as by this.

The perishing world—it has no other light in its increasing darkness than the ray which beams from the holy life and the exhibited love of God’s dear child. They have no Christ on earth now to manifest the Father. *We* are His witnesses. They are to learn God from what they see in us. He was the light of the world: we now are the light of the world. How are we discharging this sacred trust?

The darkness is deepening around us. The world, while blinded by its god into boasting of its progress, is hurrying headlong to destruction at a rate never before attained. We are in the last days truly, and perilous times have come. Evil men and seducers have waxed worse and worse. Good is called evil, and evil good. And to intensify the evil and danger to the uttermost, the form of godliness is kept up while the power is denied. Does not God call upon us to remember from whence we are fallen, and to repent and do the first works. It is a day of resting in the knowledge of truth and in doctrines; but will anything compensate for failure to *live the life of Christ*?

We are *not our own*, but *bought with a price*, even the precious blood of Christ. If this is true in all its simplicity, can the ransomed slave, the one who has

been purchased from slavery to evil, to become the bond-servant to his Redeemer, live henceforward to the world, or to himself, or as if his Redeemer had not a claim to all that he is?

“What a man sows that shall he also reap.” How solemnizing a motive is this. We shall hereafter gain reward or suffer loss according as we walk, or fail to walk, as obedient children here. “The fire shall try every man’s *work* of what sort it is.” And “He that hath eyes like unto a flame of fire” has said, “I will give unto every one of you according to *your works*.” Will not the prospect of these realities avail to make us gird up the loins of our minds, and *lay aside every weight*, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us? Will we not with Paul LABOUR that we may be WELL PLEASING to God? Will we not give earnest heed to daily growth in subjection of spirit, and obedience, and conformity to Christ, lest when we have *preached* to others, we ourselves should be “*disapproved*?”

Does not the barren fig-tree speak a word in season to some of us? “Three years,” said the master to the dresser, “I come seeking *fruit*, and find none. Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord let it alone *this year also*, till I shall dig about it and dung it, and if it bear fruit, well, and if not, then thou shalt cut it down.”

Finally, the time is short. The night cometh when no man can work. It is high time to awake out of sleep. At any moment your time of precious opportunities, dear reader, or mine, may come to an end. At any time we may be called away: at any time the bright and morning star may rise, and we may be caught up to be for ever with the Lord. Shall we not watch to be among those who love His appearing? shall we not be delighted to be found of Him in peace?

“THE REWARD OF THE INHERITANCE.”

WE read in 2 Peter i. 11 of “an *abundant* entrance” into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” We read too in 1 Cor. iii. 15 of those “saved, yet so as by fire?”

Is it scriptural to suppose that those who have fought a good fight and kept the faith, who have endured hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, will have the same portion as those who are “saved, yet so as by fire?”

Will not our capacity for blessing hereafter, depend much on our having benefitted by obedience to Him here?

All are saved by grace, not by works in any measure; yet will not those who have been slothful here, who have not added to their faith virtue or courage, and to courage knowledge, &c., &c.—will not they lose, yea *sensibly* lose, hereafter?

Is it any comfort to the *spiritual* soul to say, “Well, I don’t mind as long as I get to heaven?” Will not those whose works have all been burned up *know it as their loss*? Will they have the same portion? Will they be sensible of the same joy as those who “receive a reward?”

Will there not be some who receive “a *crown* of life?” a *crown* of righteousness?” “a *crown* of glory?” In Jesus Christ, all who are saved have life, righteousness, and glory; but will *all* be crowned? Will not some receive one, some two, some three crowns? Will not some have no crown of *reward* at all?

These crowns seem given for different reasons.

“Be thou *faithful unto death*, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

“Blessed is the man that *endureth temptation*; for when he is tried (at the Βημα), he shall receive the

crown of life, which the Lord hath promised *to them that love Him.*"

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give to me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them *that love His appearing.*"

"Feed the flock of God . . . *being ensamples to the flock*; and when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

We may gather that these crowns are given as rewards for faithfulness in the daily life, faithfulness in service for the Lord, and for holiness or consistency of example unto the flock of God.

St. Paul speaks in 1 Cor. ix. of running the race for an incorruptible crown, and keeping under his body, lest he should lose the reward. He evidently warns believers, that they may run carefully, lest they should be "*αδοκιμος*" or *adjudged losers of the prize of the race*. He was not running for the salvation of his soul as a prize, or else the reward would have been "not of grace, but of works;" but he was running for a crown, a reward. He was saved by grace: he was *rewarded* according to his works. (1 Cor. iii. 13; 2 Cor. v. 10.)

Beloved, there seems to be a lack of spiritual desire to follow on to know the Lord. Do we pray with St. Paul, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead (walk out from amongst the death round about me) not as though I *had already attained*, either were already perfect"?

Beloved, shall we not hereafter sensibly lose, if we fail to use the means He has given us for our growth in grace here? Shall we not enjoy Him hereafter in measure as we learn of Him now? Will not our place hereafter be determined by our life here?

Beloved, will it be with unmoved feelings that we shall see, when at His tribunal, all our works burnt up, because they have not been for His glory? Do you think it possible that a life misspent for Him (I speak not of the life when unconverted) will gain equal honour, and give equal joy, as a well-spent life?

Beloved, is not His word full of incentive to us to press on to the prize, and not to be slothful? Oh, think not carnally that we can escape lightly, if we fail to use His gracious provision here.

Oh, seek an abundant entrance, a *near* place to Him in the glory. The more we learn and know of Him here, the more capacity shall we have to enjoy Him hereafter. “To him that hath shall more be given.” I fear lest it should be a loss, yea a sensible loss, throughout eternity, to have lived carelessly here.

Run for the triple crown. “Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. . . . For *so* an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

“NO ROOM.”

“THE foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” Shall we make room for the foxes who spoil the tender grapes, make room for the birds of the air, the unclean spirits, and leave “no room” for Him who still seeks a home in the hearts of His own?

Alas, alas! that we should ever suffer our Beloved to stand without till His head is filled with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night! (Canticles v. 2.)

Was it not enough that we once made His temples stream with blood for us? Shall we again damp that sacred brow with the cold dews of neglect?

THE FELLOWSHIP OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS.

PHIL. iii. 8-12.

THE believer in the Lord has learnt the value of the cross of Christ to his own soul. By it he has been saved, and seen the condemnation due to his sin for ever passed away. The sufferings of his Lord he knows to have been borne, that *he* might escape the terrible penalty due to sin; and these sufferings become to him the pledge of all those "precious promises" which are his, through "precious faith" in the "precious blood."

There is a danger of his stopping here, in a joyful satisfaction in the benefit which the cross of Christ has secured for him, as if the object of his salvation centered in himself rather than in his Lord. This would be to turn the unselfishness of the love of Christ into the selfishness of a self-love, and to mar the great object of our salvation—even our being conformed to the moral glory of the Son of God.

Very different were Paul's thoughts when he gloried in the cross. It was not merely because he was saved by it; not because it was the symbol of an everlasting deliverance from the deserts of sin; but he gloried in it because it had nailed *him* to the cross likewise; and he, as a crucified man—crucified to the world and the world to him—henceforth took his stand as learning the lesson of the cross in his own experience.

To this he alludes in the Epistle to the Philippians, when he speaks of winning Christ and of being found in Him. (Chap. iii. 8, 9.) He was not content to stand *only* as a saved soul, not having on his own righteousness. This was but a means to the great end, that Christ might dwell in him, and find a home and habitation in his heart, even as he had found a home and a habitation in Christ. To this end he seeks to lay hold

on that for which he had already been laid hold on by Christ.

Salvation was to be worked out *in him*, to the joy and glory of Christ, as *his* salvation had been wrought out in Christ, to his joy and to his glory. He therefore seeks to know "the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death;" and he sums up what he means by saying, "*that I may know Him.*"

The knowledge of Christ to Paul was not that far-off knowledge of a hearsay Christianity, but that direct and personal acquaintance which is the very essence of communion and the life of fellowship.

The soul of the blessed Jesus yearned for fellowship. We read that "He sought for comforters, but there were none:" and *He seeks it still*. It was this that led Him to take Peter and James and John with Him into the garden of Gethsemane. He wanted them to watch with Him, and in sympathy with His dark hour, to give Him the joy of conscious fellowship; and though they then failed, yet the promise had been given that they should indeed drink of the cup that He drank of, and should be baptized with the baptism wherewith He was baptized.

To weep where the Master wept, to sigh where He sighed, and to groan where He groaned, is the privilege of every true-hearted servant. Into this the Apostle Paul entered, and thus learned to know Him as none can know, except those who tread the same path, even the path of the fellowship of His sufferings.

EATING THE SIN-OFFERING.

LEVITICUS vi. 25-30.

THE typical truth contained in *eating* the sin-offering, presents to us a still deeper fellowship with Christ crucified, than that spoken of in the foregoing paper. It unfolds to us an individual "filling up" (in measure) of the sufferings of Christ, "for His body's sake,"

which we desire to consider in its application to those who labour in the gospel.

The sufferings of the Lord on the cross had special reference *to sin*, and if the presentation of His gospel is to be in power, if the yearnings of His love are to find a response in our hearts, if the tears He shed over ruined sinners are to meet with sympathy in our bosoms, *we must have fellowship with Him as the sin-bearer.*

Sin-bearing is to be distinguished from sin-atoning. In the latter the blessed One stood alone. *His life's blood only could atone.*

When Paul preached, he did so with tears (as we read in Acts xx. 19), and thus served the Lord in "all humility of mind." He could say with David, "Rivers of water run down mine eyes because they keep not Thy law." He thought of the dishonour of his God to whom He prayed—"Hallowed be Thy name—Thy will be done;" and he thought of the misery and woe of those who were destroying themselves in rejecting God's salvation.

He felt what sin was in the life and history of others. He knew that sin unwashed away must lead to that place of weeping and wailing and woe; and he did not fail to remember what sin had cost *God* in the economy of His grace.

Thus it was that Paul's ministry was intensely a priestly one on behalf of the lost ones to whom he preached, and for whom he laboured. He writes of this peculiar character of ministry in Rom. xv. 16, when he speaks of himself as a temple-servant (*λειτουργός*) of Jesus Christ, "performing the priestly service (*ἱερουργεῖν*) of the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified in the Holy Ghost."

The priestly service which we are called to render to the world is no other than the presentation of Christ as the *sin-offering*; so presenting Him to the sinner as

that eternal once-for-all offered Sacrifice for sin, as to lead him to place his hand by faith on the head of the Sacrifice.

This truth is particularly illustrated in the ordinance of eating the sin-offering when offered by a priest for a sinning Israelite. It gives us a priestly conception of the sin-offering of Christ, which is but little understood, and but little practically entered into.

May God enable us to tread His courts, and to surround His altar, with unshod foot, while treating this hallowed subject; for it may be, that the secret reason of the want of power in the ministry of the gospel is to be found in our failing to fulfil the Lord's will concerning us, as typified in the command to *eat* of the sin-offering.

In Leviticus vi., after the ordinances of the various offerings, we read—"This is the law of the sin-offering: In the place where the burnt-offering is killed shall the sin-offering be killed before the Lord: it is most holy. *The priest that offereth it for sin shall eat it: in the holy place shall it be eaten, in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation (or of meeting). Whatsoever shall touch the flesh shall be holy.*"

This eating of the sin-offering is what appears to be involved in the priestly service to which Paul alludes, as pertaining to him as an ambassador for God to the Gentiles, and as occupying a priestly place on their behalf.

The eating of a sacrifice always signifies strength derived from fellowship with the object typified. Thus the Paschal Lamb eaten, becomes the emblem of strength vouchsafed through living fellowship with Christ, and corresponds with the abiding in Christ spoken of in John xv., and with the eating and drinking of the flesh of the Son of man spoken of in John vi.

No man could eat of his own sin-offering, for in it as a sinner he comes seeking forgiveness, and until that forgiveness is accorded there can be no fellowship; but

following the sin-offering we have the *peace-offering*, the symbol of communion.

The sin-offering represents the judgment due to sin, and to carry out this truth as fully as it was possible for the type to do, the bodies of those beasts, whose blood was brought into the sanctuary for sin, were burned "without the camp," being there consumed in judgment. This is a terrible exhibition of the truth, that "*after death comes the judgment.*" The fire burning and consuming outside the camp, is the faint foreshadowing of "that fearful looking for of judgment," that awaits sin, and all to which sin attaches, or from which sin has not been removed.

Outside the camp was the place where the leper was constrained to be (coinciding with the valley of the son of Hinnom *outside* Jerusalem), and without the city our Lord was crucified.*

We would press the earnest consideration of this point on all who doubt the reality or the necessity of future punishment; for had death met all that the judgment of sin demanded, why this after-exhibition of a judgment fire? *Altar* fire does not come down for judgment, but for acceptance; not in wrath but in joy; and therefore the result of the fire on the altar is not to *consume*, but to *incense up*. †

It is very important to remember this, so that the work of the cross may be fully comprehended in all its glory, as the meeting-place of judgment and mercy; of

* With this we must connect *hell* (hades) and *the grave*, for His spirit went to the one as His body lay in the other; yet He dies with the assurance that His spirit should not be left in hell, nor His body see corruption. The fire that consumed the already dead victims bears witness to this solemn truth, that there is a judgment beyond death of which *hell and the grave* are the exponents.

† The word *to burn* in Hebrew is *never* used of the fire on the altar; the word which is used is *to cause to ascend as incense*, as of the incense on the golden altar. In fact there is a far greater and deeper connection between the brazen and the golden altars than is usually seen.

wrath and of acceptance; the place and the time where all the divine contrarieties—so to say—meet and harmonize, and “righteousness and peace” can kiss; not the one setting aside the other, as if the holiness of God could make a compromise with the love of God, but blending, as the blue and scarlet of the sanctuary into the purple, which lay between them.

There are no compromises with God, and there must be none in our minds in regard to the work of God as seen in the person of Christ; and there are no compromises in God’s dealings with us; and let there be none in our dealings for God.

We have dwelt a little on this point, because it is needful in seeking to fathom what is meant by a priest eating of the sin-offering. While the sin-offering for the nation *must* be burnt *without* the camp, the sin-offering for each sinning Israelite must be *eaten* by the priest in the holy place.

In order to make the sin-offering acceptable, the priest must have fellowship by *eating* of it himself. Corresponding with this in its gospel aspect, which we are more especially considering, the one who presents Christ now as the sin-offering must taste in spirit, shall we say, the wormwood and the gall of the cross in his soul’s deep fellowship with Christ’s sin-bearing.

Is not this the travail in birth of which Paul speaks? The apostle sought to enter into the judgment of sin upon the cross, and realized that the same judgment would really fall upon the sinner, if he continued to set at nought all God’s counsel, and turned a deaf ear to all the witnesses of the love of God, as manifested in the blood shed on Calvary.

These are the bowels of Christ Jesus; the yearning of that infinite compassion which caused Him to weep when He came down the mountain side, and saw lying out before Him the city that was to seal her iniquity in His death. Her sin drew forth tears, and not reproach; regret, and not anger; and so will it be when

the sin-offering is eaten, and the spirit of the great sin-offerer is drunk into.

Why is there often the hardness, the want of yearning tears, in the ministry of the gospel? Is it not because the mind of Christ has not been entered into in regard to sin? Is it not because we know not the spirit of Him who was "crucified *through weakness*" (2 Cor. iii. 4), and cannot take the apostle's place of being "weak in Him"?

The cross brings with it weakness, and this is what fellowship with Christ in His glorious sin-offering work does. Its agonies are felt; its fearful weight is known; its misery is realised; and therefore the heart is broken under its weight; and with such an one his words are tender, his touch sympathy, and his voice love and pity. He knows, he feels, what he is speaking about; and sin is to him not a dogma for an argument, used to point a moral or teach a lesson, but a heavy burden borne with Christ for man. Not for *himself*—*his sin has been* for ever put away. He knows fully that the judgment of *his sin* has passed, and the bitterness of death is gone; for in the precious blood he can read his title to an inheritance that is eternal.

But made free for himself, he is able to have fellowship in the cross for others; and while thus "weak in Him" who as the sin-offering was crucified through weakness, he by virtue of that very weakness lives with Christ, in the power of God toward others. Power out of strength begets pride; power out of weakness begets meekness and gentleness; and this gentleness in dealing with the sinner is essential to make any one a genuine minister of Jesus Christ.

There have been many who in the weakness of the cross have wept and prayed their nights before God, and these are the instruments fitted for the Master; and yet, lest any should be lifted up, God often uses the most unfitted instruments; for in the sovereignty of His grace He uses whom He will, that we may know

that He is the worker. But if like in Samson's case, God takes up and uses the jaw bone of an ass, let not one so used boast as if he had been a *polished shaft* in the quiver of the Almighty. The polished shafts alone are *vessels unto honour*, fit for the Master's use.

The truth typified in the *eating* of the sin-offering is that by which the shaft is polished. This is not accomplished by a theory of crucifixion, but by the reality of the soul's fellowship with Christ in His suffering for sin.

We know the memorable occasion on which, for the first time, Aaron was called on to eat the sin-offering, and on that very occasion he failed to do so. Sin had come into his household; Nadab and Abihu were dead; judgment had followed a guilty disregard of the holiness of God's altar fire, and fire from the Lord had come out and consumed them. The judgment oppressed the feeble representative of the Son of God, and that which he should have eaten was burnt. Moses was angry, for the command of God had been broken; but he saw at once in the answer of Aaron that there was a needs-be; and the failure reveals to us this, that he *only* can act for another God-wards, who, resting in God, is above failure and judgment.

Leviticus x. contains deeply important truth, explaining much of the practical weakness of our service to the sinner. We will add no more, but commend this subject to all God's dear people who sigh and cry over want of success and power in the testimony to the world of *Christ the sin-bearer*.

We need to learn the secret of a *loving testimony*, which will make the conscious weakness of the cross the source of mighty power through God: to whom be all glory now and ever.

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Amen and Amen.

THE TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS.

THE Lord Jesus was in all points tempted like as we are, yet He was without sin. "In that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." "Then was Jesus led up of *the Spirit* into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil."

The Second Man, the Lord from heaven, stands before us. The arch enemy is about to put forth all his power to tempt Him.

His temptations are varied, but in 1 John ii. 16 they seem defined clearly under three heads—"The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." These comprise "all that is in the world," and they are "not of the Father."

Our first parents were tempted through these. In Gen. iii. 6 we read, "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food (the lust of the flesh), and that it was pleasant to (a desire to) the eyes (the lust of the eyes), and a tree to be desired to make one wise (the pride of life), she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat."

Satan comes to her suggesting a doubt. She listens; and, hearkening to the tempter's voice, allows that there *may be* a desire on God's part to withhold good from her. So, mistrusting God, she lusts, she longs, she takes; and she finds out that she is no longer as she was before, happy as dependent on God, but poor, and wretched, and naked, dependent on herself; knowing good, and powerless to do it; knowing evil, but powerless to resist it. She gives to her husband with her; he eats, and they find themselves ashamed—afraid. They have separated themselves from their dependence on God, and find they have nothing in themselves. This is *death*; for man only *lives* as dependent on God.

Thus sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and death is the separation of the soul from God.

“Christ was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil.” The first man, deceived by Satan, falls; and with him all his race. The Second Man—from God—now appears; and before He can be proved to be the fitting Restorer of the first Adam’s ruin, He must show Himself proof against all the tempter’s wiles, worthy of being the Captain of man’s salvation.

The scene is the desert, amid “*wild* beasts.” Not in a garden, surrounded by all that was pleasant, with every desire satisfied—but after forty days’ fast, and “an hungered,” is JESUS, the Son of man, tempted. Doubtless too these forty days of solitude, amid “wild beasts,” with every suggestion of evil that Satan could bring to bear upon Him, were awful in themselves.

Satan tempts not as some dark fiend, but as “an angel of light,” insidiously suggesting under guise of truth some way or means of action, fair and plausible to all appearance, but showing its hideous reality when tested by the truth of God.

To the weary and hungered Son of man the suggestion gently is whispered, “If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” Whether a doubt is cast on His being the Son of God, or whether the force of the temptation lay in His being dared to use His asserted divine power, we pause not now to consider. His reply, that “*man* should not live by bread alone, but by every word of God,” evidently proves that, as man, He was tempted to leave His place of dependence on God, and to assert His own right of self-action—a temptation all the more strong because the object seemed right and lawful, self-preservation being enjoined of God.

The “lust of the flesh” is strong, almost overpowering; but to obtain one’s own desires apart from God, however lawful those desires may be in themselves, is to cut oneself off from reliance on Him.

What is food, but as blessed of God? What are means of sustenance, but God-filled channels? Creature sustenance may fail, the Creator cannot.

On Him Jesus relied, and this first dart of Satan fell harmless off the shield of faith in God, held by the Man Christ Jesus. "It is written," He said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Eve reasoned and fell. Had she fallen back on the word of God, Satan would have fled discomfited; but she brings her own thoughts to bear on God's command, then adds thereto—"nor touch it"—and finally thinks she is hardly dealt by, and mistrusts God's wisdom and love.

For us the lesson is plain—not "to be wise above that which is written." God has given us in His word full wisdom to meet every device of Satan. By the words of His lips alone can we be kept from the paths of the destroyer.

In Luke and Matthew the order of the second and third temptations is reversed. Luke probably gives us the moral, and Matthew the actual order.

"Then the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them in a moment of time, and saith unto Him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt fall down and worship me, all shall be thine."

"The god of this world" causes to pass before Him all this world's kingdoms and glory in dazzling array. The mighty empire of Rome, then in its zenith; the nations of the east and west; and the then unknown nations of the earth—all are seen—all are offered for *one act* of homage.

Will Satan gain the day? Had he not been seeking ever before to seduce the created intelligences from their allegiance to God? Had he not succeeded in

dragging down angels with him? Had he not seduced the first Adam, and caused him to leave his place of dependence on God to listen to a lie?

And now with mighty power he tries the Second Adam. He offers Him wondrous glory.

Did he know that the Son of man had come to re-take those very kingdoms for the Father? Did he know that it was for this end He came into the world? Was he cognizant of the counsels of the Father, Son, and Spirit? And did he know the plan, pre-arranged from before the foundation of the world, that the Son should redeem through death the lost inheritance?

Was he tempting the Son of God to take the inheritance without the redemption—death? Or was it that he was merely arraying the lust of the eyes and the pride of life before the Son of man, and seeking to allure Him to be great apart from God?—to acquire at easy cost that which man deems so glorious—the praise and fame of this world—and to forego that honour which cometh from God only?

We know not whether this trial was mental, or whether in some majestic form the tempter (serpent-like) appeared before the eyes of the weary Son of man. Forty days had He endured the desert, amid “wild beasts;” and the weary frame, well-nigh exhausted, was thus tempted.

Forth flashed the sword of truth from the hand of the Mighty, and “Get thee hence, Satan,” falls on the astonished ears of the wily foe, thundered forth in holy anger, and quickly followed by the piercing thrust, “For it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.”

Full well remembered he his *own* rebel act—*his* refusal to worship and serve God only—and discomfited, he fell back.

Beloved, let us, when tempted in like manner, flee to “Him who is able to succour them that are tempted.”

Gathering up his strength for a final assault, mindful of his previous defeat, calculating now that if he use the word of God as a cloke he may likely succeed, the devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple. 'Now if thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence; for surely it is written, "He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." Surely thou canst trust God to keep His word: it cannot be broken.'

It *was* written, "He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee"—but it was added—"in all thy ways." This "the liar from the beginning" had omitted. All His ways were pleasing to His Father, not contrary to His Spirit.

The foe was defeated. Making his final attack, he had overreached himself, and without a word of retort he leaveth Him, feeling the mighty force of the word of Him whom he yet trembled at—"It is written, Thou shalt not tempt (or unnecessarily put to proof) the Lord thy God."

Even the devil cannot resist the truth. He maketh no answer thereto. It is only when we make excuse for God, that he presses hard on us: when we lean on God, on God's word, he flees.

The Son of man, the Second Man, stood victor over the devil. *He* had attacked, but found nothing in Him; and though ever and again, using various guises, he assailed and sought to turn Him aside from His path, yet never had he even momentary triumph; and when at the cross he thought to ruin man's Deliverer for ever, he found himself for ever crushed, and learnt that in *Him* who rose again from the dead there was eternal safety for the sons of men, whom he had thought to keep in his grasp for ever.

"Then the devil leaveth him, and angels came and ministered unto Him."

Forth from the Father came the loving ministers of His affection, to bear to the fainting victor the tokens of His heart, "meat to eat" for the refreshing of the soul.

Beloved, such victory did Jesus achieve over our enemy. Now He lives, ever to succour us when tempted.

FORBIDDEN FOOD.

"Thou shalt not eat of anything that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, or thou mayest sell it unto an alien; for thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God."—DEUT. xiv. 21.

"All *flesh* is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth."—ISAIAH xl. 6.

How universal then is the prohibition! What is there in this world that we, the "holy people unto the Lord our God," may eat, or feast our souls upon? Nothing; for death reigns, and defilement mingles with all that we touch, taste, or delight in belonging to mere nature, and it is therefore unsuitable food for those who are born from above.

Are we then left to starve? Is there no food for the household of faith to feed on without blame or injury?

Oh, surely there is meat suitable, meat in abundance. "The God of all grace" has provided meat that dieth *not of itself* for His own household—even the "*Lamb slain* before the foundation of the world"—that Blessed One who came down from heaven, who was "not of this world," who was "without blemish." There was no disease, no taint of sin in Him, therefore death had no claim upon Him; for death is the wages of sin. He is essentially "life," "the Prince of life," who has life in Himself. "That which *decayeth* and waxeth *old*" is "ready to vanish away;" but *He*, by the "power of an endless life," continueth ever." He has "the dew of His youth."

Here, then, is the "Lamb" which God hath "provided for Himself," and which He has Himself slain, that His children also may partake of it *with* Himself,

now that they are "brought nigh" by the blood of the Victim. And oh how ready, how thankfully ready, should we be to let go every other portion! How willing that "the strangers" should take what is permitted them, seeing they have nothing better, and could not partake of our food although we offered it to them. They have no taste for that holy blessed Lamb which has been slain for us. He "hath no comeliness," say they, "that we should desire Him."

But while we, through the grace of our God, have been made wiser than they, while we have been led to choose Him who first chose us, and to *love* Him who first loved us; do we at all times in our hunger go to the wonderful provision which God has made? or do we not rather seek to satisfy the cravings of our souls elsewhere?

Some of us, at least, are too apt to seek unto the dying world for food for the heart's affections; not perhaps now as sustenance altogether, as in the days of our strangership; but we are not satisfied with Christ *alone*, though in Him is *all* precious fulness and infinite variety. Some earthly thing, or "the *goodliness* of the flesh," gets a place which we scarcely think we are giving it. Some loveliness of nature which we see in others, or may be our *own* so-called excellencies even, make us forget that it is written—"it passeth away." And how often it is not until the cherished idol has faded away, or we are made to cry out, "O *wretched* man that *I* am!" that we lose our false taste and are able to turn our hearts back, and to feed again on that which alone can nourish and sustain the child of God, and give him strength and vigour for the onward journey.

Let us seek earnestly to yield our heart's affections to Christ, to give Him the *first* place. Then all other things will be held in subjection to Him, and will not hinder our soul's true blessing.

But when it is otherwise, and some earthly object takes the Lord's place, He is often obliged to come in

with His chastening rod, and we sorrowfully prove the truth of that word, "All flesh is grass."

How gracious of Him to send the "burning heat." How merciful of Him to command "the wind to pass over it," and blight and wither what we made a wrong use of, and with what reverent love should we bow our heads, even though the "stormy wind, thus fulfilling His word," make us shrink with fear!

Let us then "gird up the loins of our mind," and "walk by faith," believing that "God is Love," both in His prohibitions and commands, and also in His dealings with us in every way, however loudly our evil hearts of unbelief may clamour, "all these things are against me."

GRACE MULTIPLIED.

"GRACE and peace be *multiplied* unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." It is as we get acquainted with God and His dear Son, that our souls grow in peace and strength.

The knowledge of *ourselves* is the knowledge of sin and misery. The knowledge of *God* is the knowledge of love, and strength, and joy.

Seek to know HIM more, to know Him in His Son, and by His word.

GIFTS OR GRACE?

NEVER grieve at the want of *gifts*: the gift of a broken and a contrite heart is better than the tongues of angels,—the faith that can remove mountains.

To whom is it that Jehovah looks? To the eloquent, the brilliant, the man who understands all mysteries, all knowledge? No; to the poor in spirit, to him who *trembleth* at His word; and I wot that *they* whom Jesus looks upon are well looked after, that *they* with whom the Holy One delights to dwell, possess better than ten thousand gifts.

“I WOULD NOT LINGER HERE, LORD!”

I would not linger here, Lord,
 My heart is set on Thee ;
 I have no rest on earth, Lord,
 Mine with Thyself to be.

The deep dark waters flow, Lord,
 But Thou dost lead me through ;
 Thine arm doth make a pathway,
 The Ark is still in view.

Deep unto deep may call, Lord,
 But Thou hast gone before ;
 Thy strength, thy love, thy pity,
 Thy word, my portion are.

Thou hast done all things well, Lord,
 Well, though I faint and fail ;
 When Thine hand layeth low, Lord,
 Thy love must still prevail.

Thy tender voice doth cheer, Lord,
 The silent night of woe ;
 And fears and sorrows vanish
 Before its accents low.

And Thou dost bid me hope, Lord,
 E'en in the darkest night ;
 Thou tellest me the mansions
 Of rest are full in sight

No barrier lies between, Lord,
 No darkness mars *that* way ;
 The path lies clear before me,
 The end—eternal day.

And Thou dost lead me home, Lord,
 Home to Thy feet, Thy heart ;
 Home to Thyself, Thy presence,
 Known only now in part.

My heart is stayed on Thee, Lord,
 E'en in the darkest day ;
 The Home will be the brighter
 For *all* life's checkered way.

THE TEMPTATION.

THE interesting article in the last number on "The Temptation in the Wilderness" has suggested some further remarks on the same subject.

What a wonderful and awful group of actors is before us—Christ and attendant angels, Satan and the wild beasts! (Mark i. 13.) We are almost involuntarily carried back to another scene in which four parties took part—Adam and Eve, Satan and God Almighty.

The success of his schemes in the one case emboldened the foe to try a similar mode of action in the other. He considered man as his own since Eden's gate was shut against man; and as Jesus was a Son of man, he claimed His allegiance and His worship.

He may have known that one slightest taint of sin in the Redeemer would defeat the whole plan of redemption.

The "strong man armed" had kept his palace long, and all his goods were in peace. But a stronger than he had come upon him, and this is their first encounter in dual combat.

The beasts of the field were here, but "the serpent was more subtle" than them all. (Gen. iii. 1.) They offered no violence to their Maker in His hour of weakness, but he, assuming solicitude for His welfare, dares to tempt Him to that crime by which himself had been destroyed—*independence of God*.

The temptation is threefold. The *first* relates to Jesus' life on earth. The *second* to His death. The *third* to His kingdom.

"The tempter's" art was one. It said: 'Be independent in life;' but if not, 'Destroy thyself;' and failing in this, 'Assume thy kingdom forthwith.' At

all events, be independent even in one act, and that is enough. The life of faith will be broken, the spell will be destroyed.

I. The first temptation is that of Esau over again. Esau hungered, despised his birthright, and for one morsel of meat sold it.

“If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread” (Matt. iv. 3), and satisfy thy hunger. In other words, ‘What is this Sonship, this birthright worth, if now you perish with hunger?’

As the Holy One of God replies, the bright blade of the sword of the Spirit flashes with a ray of light from the countenance of God, who but a little while before had given Him that sweet assurance, “This is my beloved Son.”

To the tempter, who would throw a doubt on this, He might say, ‘To hear the voice of my Father, and to do His will, is meat to me (John iv. 34); and the words of His mouth I esteem more than my necessary food.’ (Job xxiii. 12.)

“If a son ask bread of his father, will he give him a stone?” (Matt. vii. 9.) Yet Satan would have Him believe and act as if God had done so to Him. If the beloved Son ask bread, it shall be given Him. To make it from those stones would imply that God was not so good a Father as man.

But no pang of hunger can tempt that blessed One to despise His birthright. He walks by faith. The word of God is both His food and His defence. With *it* He is satisfied in hunger, and with *it* He is victorious in temptation.

II. Foiled and overcome in the wilderness, Satan, with impious audacity, leads the way to the “holy city,” and even to the “temple” of God, hoping to make an open display of his victory over Christ on the very platform of God’s transactions with men, and within the sacred precincts of His consecrated place.

His weapon the same, he now changes the point of attack. He had tempted to self-preservation, now to self-destruction. "Cast thyself down." He little knew that the Redeemer's death would be the means of his own utter defeat, and therefore sought to compass it by all means from the day He was born till the moment of apparent success. He tries to conceal his true intent by a transparent misapplication of God's word.

Contrast the scene at Calvary. Here he allures Him to destroy Himself: there he challenges Him to save Himself. "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down." "If thou be the Christ, come down from the cross."

In the one case we hear the voice of the subtle serpent, the father of lies, quoting Scripture to prove wrong right; in the other the savage roar of the lion of hell, as he gloats in the blood of his victim.

Thus in this wonderful and awful encounter the holy light that shone from Jesus exposes the hideous enormity of the devil's deceit and malice, and the intensity of the darkness shews by contrast the sublime perfection of the beloved Son of God.

As to the angels having charge of Jesus, it was true; and but a moment later we find that Scripture fulfilled, for we read, "The angels came and ministered unto Him." But Satan quotes it out of place, and truth out of place may become falsehood. He makes but a poor thrust when he ventures to employ the sword of the Spirit against the Son of God; it turns and wounds himself.

III. Unable to make the *Living* Word of God act inconsistently with the written word of God, the tempter lays aside that weapon, and has recourse to that with which he is more familiar—*falsehood*.

He propounds the lie that the powers of the kingdoms of the earth were delivered to him, and that to whom he willed he gave them (Luke iv. 6), in direct contradiction of that which is written, "The powers

that he are ordained of God; there is no power but of God." (Rom. xiii.)

But truth distorted and truth denied are alike powerless against the Holy One of God. Satan wants to take the place of God Himself, and to be worshipped; and now for the first time Jesus calls him by name, "Get thee hence, *Satan!*" At the highest reach of his presumption he is suddenly abased to his proper place of infamy.

It is not for man to bring against this prince of darkness any railing accusation; but that which his conflict with the Son of God brings out it is our part to note and profit by.

In this temptation he not only seeks the place of God for himself, but dares to offer Jesus the place of the antichrist, the beast of the last days. "The dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority." (Rev. xiii. 2.) And this is what the dragon offers Jesus here.

Anticipating the time when in truth the control of the earth will for a fearful moment be given to him, he assumes to have it now, and offers to the CHRIST the place and power of antichrist.

In both cases the reward the dragon seeks is the same. *To be worshipped* is the climax of the fallen rebel's ambition. "Fall down and *worship* me," he said to Jesus. "And they *worshipped* the dragon," we read in Rev. xiii. 4.

Thus we have seen the failure of this subtle attempt to defeat the purpose of Christ's advent to this earth in its three chief features—His life of faith, His sacrificial death, and His kingdom as God's vicegerent in the midst of a repentant people.

Had He undertaken His own preservation, the purpose of His life would have been defeated. Had He anticipated His hour of death or of glory, He would have ceased to be the emptied and obedient servant

of God, and thus Satan's end would have been accomplished.

The book of Deuteronomy supplies all the armour of truth by which the fiery darts are quenched.

The sins of Israel in the wilderness may all be summed up under these three heads—the lust of the flesh, tempting God, and the worship of the devil in the form of idols.

Deuteronomy was written to correct these evils, and therefore affords a perfect defence whenever the same temptations are presented.

The Lord Jesus thus manifests how Israel might have kept their first estate by simple adherence to the law of Moses, in which He thus shields Himself from the powers of darkness.

In the words of Psalm cxix. we may close these remarks, hearing in them, without any straining of their original intention, the faithful and humble words of the tempted Son of God.

As He enters the arena of the fierce conflict we may hear Him say, “I shall not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments.” (v. 6.) “So shall I have to answer him that reproacheth me, for I trust in thy word.” (v. 42.)

At the first assault His meditation is, “How sweet are *thy words unto my taste!* yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.” (v. 103.) At the second, “The wicked have waited for me *to destroy me*, but I will consider thy testimonies” (v. 95), and by those testimonies the wicked one is overcome. At the third, when the glitter and glory of Satan's palace (Luke xi. 21) is the snare held out for His soul, the Holy One can say, “The wicked have laid a snare for me; yet I erred not from thy precepts.” (v. 110.)

And as Satan leaves Him and departs discomfited, hear the words of faith in God, “*Thou* hast rebuked the proud which are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.” (v. 21.)

SANCTIFICATION.

IN examining this subject it is important to bear in mind that it is *God* who sanctifies—*not* man.

The current idea about sanctifying places and persons is purely of human invention, and partakes of the old superstition common in all ages and countries. The aiming at personal holiness, apart from what the Scriptures direct, is practised by the unbeliever whether Mohamedan, Confucian, Hindoo, or nominal Christian, arising from the natural desire of man to exalt himself, thereby disparaging God.

Neither is the believer in Christ exempt from this tendency and effort; the corrupt nature still struggling mightily in him to this end; the constant purpose of the flesh being to make itself as holy as it can in order to be the less beholden to Christ. The more tender the conscience, the more readily will it detect this malady insidiously working within, often producing the entire destruction of the soul's peace.

There are two kinds of sanctification prominently brought to notice in Scripture; the first, *immediate* and *permanent*; and the second, *progressive*.

I. The first is the act of God by which He sets apart, or appropriates to *Himself*, either person, place, or object. It thus becomes sanctified or holy—altogether irrespective of the character or value of the person or thing. Just as a person becomes royal when received into the household of a sovereign; or an article when it is acquired by him. From the minister of state down to the helper in the stables, from the ship of war to the rusty nail or decayed timber on board, fitted or unfitted for the purpose—all are royal, to remain so till his majesty is pleased to disposses himself of them.

The appropriation here contemplated is *perfect* at once; it can neither be added to nor diminished.

Of this nature was the act of God in separating Israel to Himself as His people; also Aaron to be His priest; whereby they became holy (Deut. vii. 6; Psalm cvi. 16), though neither Aaron nor Israel were other than defiled sinners like ourselves. The city of Jerusalem was still the holy city long after it had been described by the prophet as "filthy and polluted" (Zeph. iii. 1); and even after its inhabitants had crucified the Son of God. (Matt. xxviii. 53.)

In this dispensation, although God has not been pleased to sanctify any place, it has pleased Him to sanctify many persons.

From the moment a sinner casts himself at the feet of Jesus, he is received into the favour of the Most High, is made one of the household of God, and sanctified in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. i. 1), set apart for God *in Him*; is washed from his sins in His blood, and is indwelt by the Holy Ghost (Rom. viii. 9-11); never to be sent away nor forsaken. The Lord God, well knowing him to be utterly vile, has nevertheless through grace *appropriated him to Himself for eternity*; and has further made him one of His own children, as well as an heir of the glory: all in Christ.

But of all this vast bestowment of blessing no part can be tested by any faculties we naturally possess. The whole lies far beyond the region of our perceptions. A babe that is born into this world knows nothing either of the grandeur or the misery to which it is heir by reason of its parentage.

The child of Adam is not aware of his utter ruin by nature, nor is the child of God aware of his future dignity, save by the information from above. God makes both known in His word; He has revealed both the ruin and the glory. If the unconverted man should say, "I don't feel that I am lost," does it alter the condition in which he is? If the Christian should say, "I don't feel that I am saved, sanctified, justified, made an heir of the glory," does this alter the position

in which through grace God has placed him? To him the reply would be, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom!"

By making our apprehension of the reality of these bestowments, contingent upon what we call our experience, do we not cast discredit upon the Most High? saying in effect that we hesitate to accord credence to His knowledge, His power, and His faithfulness, in regard to what He has promised and declared?

If the Searcher of all hearts *declares* a defiled sinner like myself to be *clean* (John xiii. 10), it is my business to *believe* it, though I am well aware of the uncleanness in me. If He declares me *sanctified*, set apart for Himself, it is surely my bounden duty to believe it, even though I can neither understand that it is so, nor find any evidence in myself to justify this exercise of His sovereign will.

Were I to make my confidence in the declaration of my God, depend partly on emotional feeling, partly on active and successful service to Christ, and partly on having brought composure to some distressed minds, should I not be seeking for extraneous evidence to corroborate what God has said, and in a region where such cannot be found? God's reason for declaring a sinner sanctified is not here on earth, but in heaven at His own right hand. Jesus is the sanctification of all who trust in Him.

If God has been pleased thus to set me apart for Himself from among the mass of my fellow-sinners, what can I do less than accept the position with gratitude? must I not rejoice in it? avow it? act upon it? praise Him for the mercy bestowed? and rejoice in Christ Jesus, through whom and in whom He has brought it about?

Hence arises the imperative necessity for separation from the world, and union with His people.

II. The secondary but not less important kind of

sanctification spoken of in Scripture may be called *progressive* sanctification.

It is found in the Old as well as in the New Testament. The injunction, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," is given in Lev. xi. 45, and in 1 Peter i. 16; and in both passages it bears upon details of conduct. Num. xv. 39, 40, has the same character. And in 1 Thess. iv. 3 it is written, "This is the will of God, your sanctification." Also in 1 Thess. v. 23, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly."

In all these passages the line of conduct is prescribed by God, who under each dispensation both guides and energises His people to do His will. "For it is God who worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Phil. ii. 13; see Isaiah lxiii. 10.)

Whenever the natural heart aims at a holy life it prescribes a standard of its own. It knows nothing of any command of God, but endeavours to do what it thinks is right.

But as the standard of right and wrong differs in each individual according to his age, education, habits, occupation, national customs and other circumstances, it practically amounts to this, that "each does that which is right in his own eyes;" that is, what he chooses to do, or to leave undone.

To such a fluctuating scale of propriety does the conscience-stricken one confide himself when he seeks to attain to holiness. Moreover God had said by Moses, "Ye shall not do after all that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is 'right in his own eyes.'" (Deut. xii. 8.) Yet this is the species of holiness which attracts the notice of mankind, and is universally held in admiration.

Saintship in one place consists in wearing unseemly garments. In another it invests itself in bright colours or gorgeous apparel. In a third it divests itself of all clothing. Sometimes it takes the shape of abstinence from this or that article of food, or it eats loathsome

things. Again it fasts, does penance, performs acts of condescension, is benevolent, &c. ; in each case professing superiority to other men—a puffing up of the flesh. If a higher flight is attempted it often attaches great importance to some one of God's commands, disparaging others, or leaving them unnoticed.

The directions which God has given for conduct are intended for those *brought nigh to Him*. They would be thrown away on the stranger and the enemy. And to whom such directions were given, from them He desires attention to each and every one of His commands, without neglecting any. The Mosaic law was to regulate the *life* of the Israelite; hence failure in any one point vitiated the required obedience.

Since the Lord Jesus Christ appeared on earth, God has been issuing through Him and His apostles a fresh set of instructions as to practical holiness. By attention to these our conduct, thoughts, and desires are to be regulated, so that they may be pleasing to Him. And, as the illustration and permanent example of a holy life, He has placed before us His beloved Son.

This perfect model is lighted up with the sunbeam, so as to command the attention of all. In HIM are exemplified the walk of faith, the labour of love, the assurance of hope, the self-sacrifice, the obedience, and every admirable quality that God so greatly delights in. By striving to imitate HIM in all His perfections, we attain a measure, insignificant though it be, of practical holiness or sanctification. But still the word is "Yield yourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead." He will mould you into the right shape.

This leads me to notice the relative position of these two sanctifications.

By the *first* the sinner is set apart for God, spirit, soul, and body. He now *belongs* to God.

By the *second* the work of his education begins, and is carried on. Previously, like the wild ass's colt, he

scorns control. But now, the neck of his rebellion having been broken, he commences to learn subjection and then obedience. The more diligent in this study the more his progress, the Holy Ghost being his ever present teacher.

Instruction in divine things with the heart yet un-subdued would be thrown away. An enemy has no ear to listen, and no desire to practise what God teaches. There would be no motive. But when once separated unto God, the soul desires to please Him by learning and doing His will.

If either of these sanctifications is overlooked, mark what follows.

If the second is cultivated while the first is unnoticed or unknown, the man is engaged in an endless chase after something which he never attains to; a sort of rolling the heavy stone up the hill, which ever rebounds when near the summit, rolling down again and recoiling as far as it lay at first—perpetual labour without success. The soul is less and less satisfied with its attainment the longer it labours; the more tender, the more uneasy.

On the other hand, if the man is content with the first, without caring for the second, he becomes an antinomian. This was the awful state of Israel of old as depicted by the prophets.

When the first is *grasped*, the second is *operative*. The Lord is glorified by the faith of His servant in believing what He declares He has done for him, and by his effort to obey His voice in imitating His beloved Son.

While God is the origin and author of both these branches of sanctification, the Christian is responsible to accept the glorious position assigned him in Jesus, and to act in accordance therewith; that so he may glorify Him who has called him out of the darkness into His marvellous light.

III. We have dwelt upon the two most prominent kinds of sanctification, but there is a *third* species; and, in order to form a clear conception of what is revealed, both this and even a fourth need to be noticed.

What I would call the third is that mentioned in I Cor. vii. 14. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband, else were your children unclean; but now are they holy."

It seems evident that what is here contemplated has no relation to the mind or heart; and scarcely with the person in the higher sense hitherto noticed. The question is whether a Christian wife may remain with her unbelieving husband, or whether a Christian man may retain his unbelieving wife.

In our day there can be no doubt upon the subject. But at the time this epistle was written a doubt might easily arise whether the divine law did not forbid such association. Nehemiah (xiii. 22-30) strongly forbade union of Jewish men with Gentile women; and Ezra (ix. and x.) takes the same view, and insists upon the rejection of the Gentile wives and the mixed offspring.

At the outset of Christianity, when "Moses was read in the synagogues," and the New Testament was not yet written, the standing enactments of Moses, and the practice of these two great reformers would not unnaturally give the tone to the early Church; the first converts being, as we know, Jews, bred up in reverence for the law, and assuming to be guides for the others. Hence the tender conscience would be uneasy whether or not the old law was still binding.

The apostle here shows it to be otherwise, and the word "sanctified" is used in a subordinate sense; declaring that the intercourse was not only allowable, but justified by divine authority; and that such parties might continue to live together, and need not separate.

No intimation is thereby conveyed that the unbeliever

was not still at a distance as regards his soul, precisely as any unmarried unbeliever, or other children as yet unconverted. The sense seems nearly if not quite the same as in Peter's vision, Acts x. 15: "What God hath cleansed that call not thou common," showing that the Gentile was no longer to be regarded as an outcast; but that each sinner, whether Jew or Gentile, was at liberty to draw near and partake of God's mercy in Christ.

I need not add that the marriage of the Christian must be "*only in the Lord.*"

IV. Then, as to a fourth use of the same word, it may be found in such passages as these: "Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear." (Is. viii. 13.) "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." (1 Peter iii. 15.) "Hallowed by Thy name;" by which we may understand, Hold in reverence, fear, awe.

Here the same principle prevails as in the former cases. God having already sanctified His great name, worthy of all reverence, fear, and awe, requires His creatures to accept His will accordingly, and insists on its being done. The chant of the seraphim embodies this "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory."

The conduct of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego exemplifies what is intended by the injunction; also that of Daniel before Darius; still more the conduct of Him of whom the Psalmist prophesies, "I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave my soul in hades; neither wilt Thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

In all these varied sanctifications it will, I think, be seen as the distinguishing feature that they originate with God, and are carried on by God, the creature responding and acting in conformity.

Man has no authority to strike out a path for himself, to determine of his own accord what is holy or how he will sanctify himself. Such was Jacob's mistake, when he declared, "This shall be God's house" (Gen. xxviii. 22), without inquiring whether such was the pleasure of the Most High. And in Judges xvii. there is recorded an elaborate hallowing of place, person and thing, in open antagonism to His commands.

Would that such procedure were limited to those days!

The only safe path for the creature is to discern and act upon what His Creator has decided. If he prefers to walk in the light of the sparks of his own kindling, the sure result will be that he "will lie down in sorrow."

WE WALK BY FAITH.

"The just shall live by faith."—HEB. x. 38.

God's dear children—those of us who have a measure of true desire to be led by Him, and to do His will—fall often into much perplexity and heart-trouble, and walk in darkness, where all should be light, through want of *acquaintance with the ways of God*, through failure to learn as we ought, from the inspired record of His mind, His modes of procedure in safely guiding the blind and the foolish by a path which necessarily they can but little discern to the appointed and assured blessing at its end. God's ways are not as our ways, and His thoughts are not as ours. If they were, our judgment would instinctively harmonise with all His appointments, and our intelligence would sufficiently apprehend all His purposes. As they are not so, we have in this respect, as in all others, to

acquaint ourselves with God, that we may be *at peace*. As the peace which results from the knowledge of sin atoned for and reconciliation with God has come to each one of us only through acquaintance with God as the God of love, the Giver of His own beloved Son for us, the Pardoner of iniquity, the God of all grace, so must our peace, as we travel onwards as redeemed ones through the wilderness—that is, our conscious, abiding enjoyment of peace, our comfort, and support, and joy, under the diverse and manifold experiences of the way, more often grievous it may be in themselves than joyous—depend on our gradual attainment of such further experimental acquaintance with our Father's manner of leading us, and blessing us, that we may not misinterpret His loving ways, and be ready again and again in the unbelief of our hearts to cry, whenever met by that which we do not understand or would not choose for ourselves, "All these things are against us."

Perhaps indeed it should suffice us that infinite wisdom and infinite love are engaged to carry us in safety all the journey through; that we have the promise of our gracious God that we shall want no good thing; and that He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, will *with Him also freely give us all things*. Truly God might have looked for this at our hands. He might well have expected that we who can even trust our fellow-man—trust one another, evil and unreliable as we all are—should be able implicitly to trust Him, our God, our Father, the One who already has so blessed us, the Holy, the unchangeable One. It might well have been enough had He said to us, "The little child cannot know the Father's mind; to the ignorant and finite much that my love appoints must appear inscrutable; let this be the helpless child's happiness through all the pilgrimage, that a gracious Father always orders and leads."

God has not, however, thus dealt with us. As a

father pitieth his children, so He *pitieth* them that fear Him. He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust. He knows how tremblingly we follow when He is guiding us along some needed path of discipline; how we shrink from the chastening through which all whom He loves must pass; how ready we are to be discouraged and dismayed when His promises seem a while to tarry, or He leads us to a goal that appeared almost within sight by a way that we know not, long, circuitous, weary, and hard to be traced.

He knows the weakness of our faith—its sinful weakness; and in gracious concern for us He has caused His word to abound with narratives of His dealings with those who have been led along these pre-appointed paths before, that we may ponder, and learn, and trust, and be not afraid. High above all the Captain and Perfecter of faith, the One who never others He has given the example of the Obedient One, distrusted, who came to do the Father's will, who never shrank from following where His Father led. And ranging under Him, the Captain of our salvation, stands many a good soldier, and many a doubting and dissatisfied one who has left a history to be recorded for our instruction.

In this aspect how instructive is the history already referred to. To the natural understanding the conclusion of Jacob, "All these things are against me," was a right one—an unavoidable one. He was the inheritor of the blessing; the land was his by promise; yet he was a stranger in it, as his fathers had been; his dwelling in it was but a tent; and when he might naturally have looked for God's intervention to put him in possession, his circumstances were such as to wring from his unbelieving heart the bitter cry, "Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." To the eye of sense truly it was so. Grievous indeed was his condition,

and dark the prospect, if "the things that are seen" were to be looked at; and if he could have foreseen that these circumstances were to result in the bondage of his children in Egypt, and their cruel affliction there for four hundred years, nothing but a trust in God which he had not attained to could have saved him from despair. *Yet all was well. Nothing* was against him, or could be. May you and I, dear reader, not read this narrative in vain. May we *remember* in our time of trial that when all seemed darkest, the God of Jacob was patiently carrying out His purposes of grace.

Consider next God's dealings with His people Israel. For them the prefigured paschal blood had been shed, and He had delivered them from Egypt by His own manifest interposition, "with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs and with wonders." What more natural then, or more reasonable, than to conclude that the same mighty hand would lead these loved and now delivered ones into the promised inheritance by the direct, and short, and easy way which they afterwards knew so well, when, having departed from the living God, they sent down to Egypt for help against their enemies? Yet He led them into the "great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water." And here, through the trials of the way, "hungry and thirsty their souls fainted in them." Had God then forsaken them? Had infinite wisdom erred, or infinite compassion failed? To the eye of reason it must indeed have seemed so. Almighty power and unspeakable love could surely have preserved them from this. Yet that love and that power were ordering all things for their blessing. Again the lesson was taught that God's ways are not as ours. He led them thus "that He might humble them, and that He might prove them, to do them good at the latter end." They little thought, and we, beloved brethren, think as little, of the

humbling that is necessary, if we are to be truly blessed. God only knew the discipline that was needed, and the path that was to be trodden, if there was to be "good at the latter end."

Consider again Elijah. How mysterious, how utterly past finding out by us were God's ways with Him. Enabled, as he stood consciously in the very presence of the Lord God of Israel, to deliver in the ears of Ahab his terrible message, "There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word," he then receives the instructions, "Get thee hence, and turn eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be that thou shalt drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee." Was this such a procedure as would have approved itself to the wisdom of man? "*Hide* thyself by the brook Cherith." Could not He who made the heaven as iron over sinful Israel, and the earth under their feet as brass, have so ordered that it should not be necessary for His faithful servant to *hide*? Could not food and water have been supplied in a way more worthy of Omnipotence than this? Instead of departing to hide himself, might not the man of God have expected a command to remain and defy the guilty king, and to be empowered, as afterwards, to call down fire to destroy all that might be sent against him?

More inscrutable still, the very provision made by God seems after a time to fail. "The brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee." Could not the God of heaven and earth have still caused the brook to flow? And a *widow*, an outcast Sidonian, who had but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse, and who was then gathering two sticks to go in and dress it for

herself and her son, that they might eat it and die—was it likely, was it intelligible, was it possible, that to such a one God could confide the safe-keeping and the maintenance of His prophet? Again the sufficient answer is, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.” And again, “Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?”

There is space for yet one more illustration of this important truth, that we are being led by *a way which we know not*, from the history of the Apostle Paul. Acts xxiii. 11 records the Lord’s own words to him—“Be of good cheer, for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, *so must thou bear witness also at Rome.*” Now, surely, short-sighted man might have said, yea, the short-sighted child of God, all obstacles will be removed: the counsel of God shall at once be brought to pass. The counsel of God, dear reader, shall surely stand; but let us mark for our own instruction and comfort the ways of God in bringing it about, and the conduct of this faithful servant of God, as an intelligent fellow-worker with God in effecting it. First note that on hearing of the conspirators lying in wait to kill him, he sends his sister’s son to the chief captain to do what he might to defeat their plans. Note next that *for two years and more* God leaves His appointed messenger *bound in prison in Asia* (Acts xxiv. 27), that he then appeals to Cæsar, and is kept still for a convenient season for the voyage. And think yet of the incidents of that voyage, of Paul’s words, “Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and with much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives;” and then of the great tempest, with “neither sun nor stars in many days,” and “all hope that we should be saved being taken away.” And contemplate Paul, after long abstinence, standing forth with the declaration, “There stood by me this night the angel of God, *whose I am, and whom I serve*, saying,

Fear not, Paul: thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, *be of good cheer, for I believe God.*" And, lastly, consider all the circumstances of the shipwreck, the soldiers' counsel to kill the prisoners, and Paul among them, and the escape of all to land, some by casting themselves into the sea, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. Could all this, unbelief or reason might have asked, be God's way of working out His purposes? Were perfect wisdom, and tenderness, and Almighty power directing all this dark and weary path of His child? Were not all these things against him?

To go no further—except indeed to commend similar meditation of all the manifold records of God's ways with His chosen ones which His word contains—*what is the lesson to us, to you, to me, brethren in the Lord?* We too have God's all-sufficient promises as Jacob, or Israel, or Elijah, or Paul, and before each one of us also God has set a path of service, and discipline, and blessing. Do we know nothing of darkness by the way when we had looked only for light—of darkness such as to make it difficult to see where the next step was to be? Do we know nothing of unexpected, unthought of obstacles and trials; of the way barred up, and long kept barred, when we reckoned on finding all open and easy to our feet; of the failure of all that we had hoped for; of sorrow and chastening instead of joy; of delay on delay, till there was nothing but the living God to depend on; of being led—it may be driven—eventually by a way the very opposite of that which we desired or thought of? And in all this experience—which, in greater measure or less, must be that of every one who is being taught of God—are we bearing in mind that we have abiding evidence, not of our being forsaken of our Father, but of our being led, and watched over, and loved by Him? .

Very briefly some of the instruction held out to

us may be gathered up under three heads of suggestions:—

First, as a stranger and pilgrim (taking the place with all seriousness if I have not yet taken it) in a world where nothing less than the wisdom of God can guide my steps aright, I am, with respect to all things and at all times, to put myself into the hands of my gracious Father *to learn His mind* and to be led by Him. He will speak to me and lead me as surely as He spoke to and led Paul or His own beloved Son. He has given me no other power to walk aright, but has ordained that I should be in myself helpless and blind, in order that I might in everything be cast on His love. Again, it is His command that I should be “not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” Again, all walking according to my own wisdom or my own will is sin; it is lawlessness and rebellion against God, for I am His, and my place in everything is to be the *obedient* child. There cannot, therefore, be any matter, however trivial I might think it, respecting which I shall look to God in vain—respecting which I shall be forced into the sin of acting without being led by Him. My necessity and my duty can be met only by my being able in everything *to ascertain my Father's mind*. I may have to wait, but God cannot fail to teach me if I wait. I must wait till the pillar of cloud be lifted up. If it “tarries two days, or a month, or *a year*” (Num. ix. 22), I must “abide” and “journey not.”

Secondly, when the voice for which the servant waits is heard, when I have learned what God would have me to do, *I must be diligent* and watchful as though all depended on my own exertions, while remembering that all is of Him, who of His grace has made me His. I must “*work out*,” though not forgetting that “it is God that worketh in me both to will and to do.” I must “*labour*” that I may be well pleasing to Him, labour in the path of obedience, look to Him for wis-

dom to do, be ever sowing as one, who, according as he sows will reap, be "ever abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Thirdly, I am to "be of good cheer," and not be discouraged if at any step or at every step obstacles or perplexities arise, if cherished hopes or objects seem frustrated, if there be sorrows where I expected to rejoice, if all to the eye of sense appears to fail, if labour, service, or a faithful walk, leads to no results, or to results the opposite of those for which I looked. Am I obeying God? Respecting this alone I need to have any care. Is it my delight to do His will? Am I a follower of Him who did always that which was pleasing to God? If so, all is well. With the true follower of the Lord, as with the Lord Himself, a walk of obedience may lead to all that for the present seemeth not to be joyous, but grievous, to that which, but for faith, would be beyond hope, to trial, to suffering, to *the cross*. It is our Father's way. Let us not be dismayed. He has told us beforehand. He has written it on every page. We cannot know now, but we shall know hereafter. It is the way of wisdom, the way of love. And "THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

Brethren, have we *reckoned on* discipline such as this? Have we taken our place in the school of God to be treated as children, and not to be disconcerted when our Teacher's ways and ends are necessarily far beyond our apprehension? Is it not enough that all things are working together for our good, that our Father has provided for us "perfect peace," by giving us a resting-place for our hearts in Himself? We may be troubled on every side, yet shall we not be crushed; we may be perplexed, but can never have cause to despair; we may be persecuted, but shall not be forsaken; we may be cast down, but cannot be destroyed.

“FEAR NONE OF THOSE THINGS.”

REVELATION ii. 10.

How often the Lord's people, when greatly perplexed and troubled, ask in the time of suffering—“*Why is this trouble sent?*” “*Why am I thus?*” The bitterness of the sorrow is increased tenfold by these anxious questionings; while too often, alas, the soul feels itself a prey to Satan's fearful malignity, and as if almost deserted by God,—left alone to agonise and to sink under the trials and difficulties, the conflicts and temptations, which the great enemy brings to bear with terrible force at such seasons. Yet, through all the tempest's roar and din, with what holy comfort, with what gracious power, sounds the soft whisper of tender cheer, from Him “*who was dead, and is alive.*”—“*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: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*”

It seems as if He “*who walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks,*” would quell the doubts and misgivings, the many questionings, the thoughts as to the *strangeness* of the “*fiery trial,*” (1 Peter iv. 12,) by His gracious words, “*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer.*” He would have us feel the gentle, strengthening touch of His right hand laid upon us (Rev. i. 17); and learn that though sorrow and suffering are indeed our portion here, still He who suffered even unto death—“*that through death He might destroy Him that had the power of death, that is the devil,*”—has robbed Satan of his power, has vanquished the great enemy, and now “*alive for evermore,*” He bids us not “*to fear.*”

The very efforts of this cruel adversary to damage our souls, to hinder our progress, or to stop our service,

are only made so many means in God's hands for bringing glory to Himself; and teaching us that in "all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loveth us."

Dear suffering, tempted child of God, art thou writhing under the pressure of this malignant enemy? Does he whisper again and again, that thou art forsaken of thy God, while the prison walls seem to grow higher, the bars stronger, and the chains more heavily weigh down thy weary spirit? Hear the gracious voice of the Captain of our salvation, telling thee that in His watchful love and wisdom, Satan has been *allowed* to cast thee into this prison "*that ye may be tried.*"

Think not that the devil can work *his* will, or that you are left *for one moment* a prey to such a foe; no, He who says to the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed," has set a limit to Satan's power. Not one step further can he carry his wretched work than our God permits.

We need not be told that the devil has more prisons than the dungeons of the Inquisition, or the cells of persecution. The sick couch of suffering and loneliness, has been the prison where many of God's children have learnt deep lessons of their weakness and sinfulness; but have also proved the truth of that promise, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." As their hearts have looked away from the prison-house, they have been lifted up above the weary couch of pain; and drinking in fresh draughts of their Saviour's tender love and pitying care, how often has their song been, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

Some Christians there also are whose souls seem bowed down under the pressure of circumstances, against whom the devil has plied his utmost efforts to cast them aside from the happy service in which they delighted. He shuts them in with prison walls, raising up against them prejudices, false reproaches, cruel

aspersions and misunderstandings. Amidst the bitter suffering of cold neglect or open revilings, they cry, "Has God forgotten to be gracious? hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" Like Joseph in prison, their "feet are hurt with fetters," they are "laid in iron" (*margin*, his soul came into iron).

In such terrible storms, the Lord's people are tested and purged, but they also prove the God in whom they trust, and find not only that He is able, but ready to save; and thus they learn the faithfulness and tenderness of the great High Priest, who Himself "learnt obedience through the things that He suffered, and became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him."

Yes, He saves eternally, *constantly*; "He saves to the *uttermost*," right through the whole of our course. He *tries* His people, but oh, He never fails to uphold and sustain, and thus the *tried* soul learns to trust the Hand that *tries*, and to own the wisdom that deals with it.

Perhaps there may be some lonely one shut out from communion with fellow Christians, with none to give the right hand of fellowship, or to cheer the weary pilgrimage, though no outward chains or bolts confine.

Oh lonely, tempted one, "fear not!" The devil has cast you into *this* prison, but no walls can keep out that heart of love which is yearning over His tried and lonely child. The Lord has allowed all that has so grieved and weighed down your weary spirit, that in the absence of all earthly cheer or spiritual companionship, you might learn as you could not else have done, the power of His arm to sustain, and the tenderness of His wonderful love. He has shut you up unto *Himself*, that thus you might know the preciousness of having Christ for your portion, and find the *all-sufficiency* of His grace. He saw how your heart was prone to "trust in man," and to "make flesh your arm," to drink from the streams of refreshment instead

of going direct to *Himself*—the source. He has cut off the streams that you may slake your thirst from the fountain of life alone.

In loving-kindness, the Lord has allowed you to be “cast into prison,” but His presence and His love can bring joy and sunshine even there, though, like Paul and Silas, you may have your “feet fast in the stocks.”

Songs of praise can ascend in the midnight hour, while your heart, humbled and thankful, will adore that love which, even while it *tried* you, has thus richly blessed and strengthened.

Whatever then may be the devil’s prison, whether sickness, perplexing circumstances, bereavement, times of need, dark hours of temptation, fierce conflict, danger, trouble, desolation, or aught else, *there is a limit* to all the trouble. Hear again the voice of the Son of Man: “ye shall have tribulation *ten days* ;” “He knoweth the *end* from the beginning ;” He is waiting to give an “expected end ;” “He is sitting as the refiner and purifier of silver.” The prison shall *not* last for ever. Ah no ! its doors *shall* be set wide open, the prisoner *shall* come forth, the tribulation *shall* cease, when it has wrought the patience and experience, which are only learnt in the school of affliction.

We read of the Israelites, that “*at the end* of the 430 years, even the *self same day*, it came to pass that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.” (Exod. xii. 41.) He who had sustained them in the furnace of Egyptian bondage knew the appointed time for their deliverance.

Look on, then, prisoner of the Lord ; look away from all Satan’s bolts and bars, and dreary dungeons, and know that our God is using all these very things to “work together for good to them that love God.” Let Satan’s attacks drive you nearer to the Captain of your salvation, and thus you will be helped instead of hindered in the Christian warfare.

Look on to the blessed end, when the ten days’ tribu-

lation shall be over. Listen to these strange words: “we count them *happy* which endure.” How different to earth’s reckoning! Oh learn God’s thoughts, gird up your loins, strengthen your heart for the conflict. “Arm yourself with the same mind” that was in Christ Jesus. Follow in His steps, and while the tempest rages, the tribulation presses sore, oh, listen to His voice: “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

Jesus would cheer your heart by showing you that His watchful eye is ever on you. He notes all the suffering, He feels your every pang, and He delights in every proof of your faith, your clinging trust in Him. He counts your sighs and tears, He is never unmindful of His tried one.

He now holds up before the eye of faith His bright reward; He points to the crown of life, which He will give when life’s journey is over. The battle will soon be fought. The prize will soon be won! We possess life *now* in our risen Lord, but He holds out “the crown of life,”—His blessed reward for all the suffering, all the conflict—His answer to the cry of His tried ones.

“Blessed,” says He, “is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is *tried* he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love Him.” “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompence of reward.”

Think of that hour of unutterable woe, when the blessed Lord suffered anguish beyond our power to comprehend. In that hour of midnight agony, He looked for comforters, but found none. And as we listen to His words of tender reproach, “What, could ye not watch with me one hour?” do they not call aloud to us to watch, and to suffer with Him too? And are they not also a loving pledge, that in all our “midnight” wrestlings, all our times of despair and desolation, He will never leave nor forsake us?

He has given us His own precious word: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." (Isaiah xli. 10.) Though we may seem to be left unaided, our Redeemer, our Lord, though unseen, is still supporting and defending. Though "flesh and heart may fail," His strength can never fail; He is only teaching us our utter weakness and wretchedness, but the cry of faith pierces the mist, which Satan would raise between the soul and its Saviour.

Suffering Christian, cast yourself at His feet, lean on His bosom, and in the power of His strength you will be enabled to utter the triumphant language of the Apostle Paul: "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

With our eye up to our precious Lord and Saviour, let us then "endure hardness as good soldiers," "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." Let us "press towards the mark for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus;" for each trial, each sorrow here, only brings us to know more of our adorable Redeemer, of His mighty power, and His all-satisfying love. Should not such lessons then be welcome to us?

Let the future bring with it what it will, may we rest in the assurance of the perfect love and wisdom, as well as the faithfulness of our God, and as we sing again and again that "new song," which He has put into our mouths, let us joyously look on to that blessed time when He shall make "all things new," and when all "sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Our Lord has Himself promised that all His dealings shall then be made plain. "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, bless these words to the comfort of some weary fellow-pilgrim.

THE RENT VEIL.

“The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.”
MATT. xxvii. 51.

“The veil of the temple was rent in the midst.”—LUKE xxiii. 45.

“A new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.”—HEB. x. 20.

God consecrated two places for His worship, the tabernacle in the wilderness, the temple at Jerusalem. Both were built according to His directions, given to Moses and to David. He devised their plan, and gave clear direction as to every detail. Nothing was made but according to His pattern.

In each there was the holy place, and the holiest of all. In each, between the holy and the holiest of all, hung a veil or curtain from pillars. Into the holiest went the High Priest *alone*, and that once only each year *with* the atonement blood.

The way into the holiest of all, where the glory of God, the shekinah, was visible between the cherubim which overshadowed the ark, was not yet made manifest. There was no personal access to God in worship, save through this priestly mediation and sacrifice.

God was teaching man the infinite distance there was between the Holy God, and sinful man. God was showing His intense repugnance to sin, and the utter impossibility of anything sinful existing in His presence.

The very intricacy and almost burdensome detail of the ceremonial law served to show the difficulty of access to God. The least omission or transgression was visited with instant and unsparing punishment. Everything connected with the worship of God showed His awful holiness, and the impossibility of man's drawing nigh to worship, save through God's own appointed way.

JESUS CHRIST is the *new and living way*; the God-appointed way. Yet has God not abated one jot of His

holiness, nor relaxed one tittle of His demands from the sinner.

In no way has *God* altered; in no way has *man*: God still awful in holiness, a consuming fire; man still vile. Yet Christ Jesus is Mediator not to appease God, but God's own daysman, the God-appointed Saviour. He dies for sin; sin is atoned for. God can be just, and the justifier of all who believe in Jesus.

God points to Him as the way, the only way. God will smite any one approaching any other way.

The holiest is made open to all, but only through the rent veil. God rent it "from top (from above) to bottom." *His* hand, not man's, made the way clear. It is no side way; the veil was rent in the *midst*. No longer is there any barrier. "Through Him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

Such is the way. Believing in Jesus, made new creatures, born again, dwelt in by the Spirit, we can draw near in full assurance of faith. Confident that Jesus has answered every claim for us by His own sacrifice of Himself, we have confidence towards God. We see His own hand has rent the veil, and made plain the way. Therefore can we doubt that His heart means us to take advantage of His grace?

Nay, God, in the fulness of time, having taught man that in himself there was no hope, brings out His own new and living way, that grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life.

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

“THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR.”

“I AM the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.”—REV. xxii. 16.

THERE is peculiar sweetness and beauty in our Lord *thus* presenting Himself to us, instead of as the Sun of righteousness; for it is not the glory and splendour of His coming kingdom which has won our hearts, but the revelation of Himself in grace, and love, and tenderness. Hence He presents Himself to the Church, and to her only, in this aspect. The world will see His glory and majesty when He comes with ten thousand of His saints to judge it; but His people, His disciples, only want *Himself*, and so He comes to them as what is unnoticed and unthought of by the world—the “bright and Morning Star.”

This hope is most *practical* when held in living power by the soul. It bears in a most direct and special way, no less upon the conscience than upon the heart. “Every man,” says the apostle, “that hath *this hope* in Him *purifieth himself* even as He is pure.” We must ever look for souls who hold this truth to express it as practically as did the Thessalonian converts, who, we read, “turned to God from idols, *to serve* the living and true God, and *to wait* for His Son from heaven.”

It seems as if “serving” were almost inseparably connected with “waiting.” Our hearts cannot be in a true state of expectancy unless our lives are practically carrying out His one desire, “*Occupy till I come.*” If I am in a state of instant expectation of the return of some loved one, I shall take care not to be mixed up and associated with what that loved one could not approve; yea, more, I shall seek to be in a position and a place in which I know it will rejoice his heart to find me.

We get a beautiful illustration of this fine principle

in the case of Mephibosheth, whose heart was so intensely occupied with his rejected lord, that his outward appearance and ways could not fail to exhibit it, and we read, he "neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed unto the day he came again in peace." (2 Sam. xix. 24.)

Would to God that we in these days bore a distinct testimony as to our carelessness and indifference towards all that is in the world around, so long as our Lord and Master is out of the scene! Would that in our ways, and manners, and dress, and conversation, we were more "*like* unto men that wait for their Lord;" like unto those who have nothing to get and nothing to lose of this world's resources, and who have nothing to say of the wilderness—like Rebecca passing through it on her way to meet Isaac—save as a sphere for learning all the depths of the riches of His grace, and using all the supplies which His hand of love has provided for the way!

If we lived in the expectation of the Lord's return, what different people we should be! We should live much more loosely to the things of time and sense. The ten thousand attractions which Satan spreads around, seeking to entice our hearts away from God, would lose their power; the flesh would be mortified, and counted as a dead thing; and the world would be in its proper place—beneath our feet! But, alas! too often this hope gets dim, and our hearts grow cold, and the road of life seems to stretch a long way before us into the dim and unknown future, and our hearts, if not our lips, echo the words of the evil servant, "My Lord delayeth His coming." It is not that we doubt His promise to return. Not at all. We believe He will, and is coming. But Satan tempts us to think "*not yet.*" So it is the old story over again—while He tarried "they all slumbered and slept."

That day, "that hour knoweth *no man*;" the deepest

prophetic student, the ablest chronologist must admit their inability to answer the deeply interesting question as to *when* He will come. Human reasonings and human calculations prove utterly at fault when they seek to determine this momentous epoch, but we do know on the *infallible authority* of the word of the living God, that He will come *quickly*, He will come *suddenly*, He will come *soon*. “Behold!” are His own words, “I come *quickly!*” “Watch, therefore, for at such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh!”

He will come suddenly, for “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” “we shall all be changed,” and “shall be caught up” to meet Him in the air. He will come *soon*; for “yet a *little while*, and He that shall come *will come*, and will not tarry.” “Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts, for *the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*”

Who can tell how nigh? Before another sun rises upon this guilty world, we, if true believers in Him, may have been taken away from the scene altogether, to be for ever in His beloved presence. “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1 Thess. iv. 16.)

But while we may hold this blessed hope as from God, and have clearly and intelligently apprehended the different aspects of our Lord’s second coming, we would do well to see that we hold it not merely as a doctrine or a theory, an important item of our Christian faith, but as a living practical power in our soul. Christianity is a living, energizing, vital principle, not a set of theological notions. It all centres *in* and around a *person*, and that person is Christ!

However deeply we may study Scripture; however

high the truth we hold; however separate from the world and its systems the place we take, we shall not be "growing up," we shall not be as "lights," we shall not be "epistles," we shall not be reflectors of Him, unless we are advancing daily in a deeper *personal* knowledge of Himself. He must ever be the source, and centre, and spring of every blessing to our souls; consequently He should ever be the object of attraction to our hearts, leading us to "go forth" from everything else *to Him*. Thus even this hope of His coming, if held only *intellectually*, apart from a personal love to Him, must be profitless.

This is the same principle which we find exemplified in the parable in Matthew xxv. It was a *person*, not a doctrine, which controlled them then. They "went forth to meet *the Bridegroom*." It was a *person* who had won their affections and attracted their hearts; and they could leave all for Him, counting nothing so precious as *Himself*.

Is it so with us? Do we long for His return, not merely because we shall then have done with the trials and sorrows of life, and have actually entered into the glory, which already by faith we know as ours; but simply because He has so completely won our hearts, that we are weary, longing for Him to come, and take us to be for ever with Himself, "whom having *not seen* we love?" Do we feel that His cross has cut every tie which linked us with this world?

This hope takes us right up out of all our circumstances down here, into the calmness of His own presence—into which they can never enter. "For our citizenship (our possession, our inheritance,) is in heaven; *from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ*." (Phil. iii. 20.) He has won our hearts and carried them with Himself, up to that bright Zoar above; and we hasten in spirit to leave the plains of earth, already so dark with clouds of coming judgment.

Let us see, as we hasten onward, that we are witnesses by the way for Him; that we are a heavenly people, whose souls are tasting what it is to have *perfect confidence of heart in the One who is coming*, and are telling it out as we pass along. We are called to be reflectors of Him down here, in His absence: as we gaze upon His unveiled face, not only to be filled ourselves with His glory, but to show it out to others. The darker the scenes around may grow, the more we are called to shine *distinctly* for Him—to “walk in the light, as He is in the light,” as those who know their living union with Him *where He is*.

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand,” and the “morning without clouds” will “usher us into the light where Christ now is. He is the bright and Morning Star; for eighteen hundred years, He has been dealing with a people down here; the night may be very dark, but the darkness does not reach up to the bright Morning Star. No cloud can cover Him; soon He will shine out. We are only on sufferance here; on our way to what lies further on. He is our bright and Morning Star; we shall see Him, He will take us up and guide us to the Father’s house, before the Sun shines out.”

And is this thought of His near approach no call to us to be up and doing—not merely to be “*waiting*” but “*servicing*?” Do we feel the *reality* of thus expecting Him? Does it stamp earnestness, decision, devotedness, upon our every work and way? Does it make us feel there is much to be done, and but a short time in which to do it?—that this is the time for labour—when He comes, but not till then, the time for *rest*; that we have opportunities *now* of being for Him, which must cease with time, while the countless ages of eternity will but ever be revealing—how blessedly and perfectly He has been “for us?”

“I am the bright and Morning Star.” It is not so much His speedy return which He puts before us as

His own self—His person. And surely it is not the glory; it is not the splendour; it is not the freedom from earth's sorrows and cares which will thrill our hearts when we rise to meet Him in the air. It will not be the place we shall occupy, or the crowns we shall wear, which shall entrance and absorb our every feeling throughout eternity, but it will be *Himself*—the One who so loved us as to give Himself for us, whom we shall meet face to face, and see eye to eye, and heart to heart, valuing indeed the surrounding circumstances as the blessing into which our union with Him has introduced us, but prizing Him, the living source and centre, above and beyond all the surroundings.

And as He will Himself be the attraction to our hearts when there, most surely *here* and *now* ought He to be the same. There may be trouble and care to pass through; there may be weakness and weariness of the flesh to bear and to suffer from, but in the midst of it all *He* should occupy our hearts.

"Do not therefore," writes one, "be seeking the riches, the honours, the power of this world, on which Christ is coming to execute judgment. One ray of the glory of Christ will at once wither up all the glory of this defiled world like an autumn leaf." What value will your wealth, your name, or your position appear in His presence? Surely none. Not that we should keep separate from this world merely because of the worthlessness of all in it, and because it is going to be judged. Certainly not. But because we know and have our portion outside it all, "in heavenly places *in Christ*;" we find Him the all-satisfying portion of our souls, and "we are separated from the world by *affection*, not by fear."

May we each know more of the reality of this. Let us seek to be in the position of men waiting for the dawn, watching through the long dark night for the Morning Star to arise—standing on the deck, as it

were, with the cry on our lips, "Come, Lord Jesus!" For most surely it will be only a "little while," and He that shall come *will* come, and will not tarry, and when "we who are alive and remain" hear His shout, and descry His presence descending to meet us in the air, be it ours to antedate the joyous cry of Israel, as yet unuttered by them, "Lo! this is our God, *we have waited for Him.*"—*From the "I Ams of Christ."*

OUR PRESENT HOME.

"Thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation."—PSALM xci. 9.

Our dwelling-place is home. It is our *protection* from storm of cold and tempest. There we find our *rest* from toil, our *food*, our *raiment*. In loneliness we seek it, for there we meet with *love* and *sympathy*. We do not *visit* our home; we *dwell* there; and if long absent from it, we grow "home-sick."

God would be all this to our *souls*. He would have each of us as blessedly free, or as we say, "at home" in His holy presence as the child in its father's house. The soul's rest, and food, and fellowship, and help, and protection, are only to be found in God. Let us therefore, who have found in God our "refuge" to flee to, make Him also our habitation to dwell in.

"ONE THING have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple."

Akin to this passage is that wonderfully rich and beautiful verse in Psalm lxxv. 4: "Blessed is the man whom Thou *chooseth*, and causeth to *approach* unto Thee, that he may *dwell* in thy courts: we shall be *satisfied* with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple."

Here are four stages of grace and blessing. They reach from the unfathomable depths of past eternity to

the far distance of our endless future. The links that unite these extremes comprehend the whole of our present life of faith. They are twofold—the “approach,” or our conversion—the abiding, or our present home in God.

First. We were “*chosen*” in Christ before the foundation of the world to this end, that we might be holy and blameless BEFORE HIM in love. Let reason question as it may, and lose itself in its own deceivings, this election is the foundation cause of every man’s conversion.

Secondly. We were “*made nigh*” by the precious blood—“*caused to approach.*” What a blessed compulsion! Shame might deter such a rebel from presenting himself at the King’s court, but the Spirit gives “boldness to enter” (Heb. x. 19), and the light of God’s countenance lifted up upon him raises the drooping head.

Thirdly. We have the amazing purpose of it all—“that he may DWELL in thy courts!” Not merely eventually, but now. The Most High would be our habitation *now*. To this end has He chosen us, and caused us to approach. He leaves us free, however. His palace is no prison. He will not force thee to stay, my brother, but He invites thee.

Hast thou accepted that bidding? Art thou a resident or an occasional visitor? Let conscience answer. With David it was the ONE THING he sought—to *abide* in Him. And we have heard what David heard not, the gentle winning words of Him who came forth to shew us the Father, “Abide in me.” Yield, oh, wayward heart! Go no more out.

Lastly comes the full fruition, the happy portion of *all* the saints, wayward and willing. “We *shall* be satisfied with the goodness of thy house.” Now we sip and taste sweet drops from the river of God’s pleasures. Now we peep and peer into the bright scene beyond. Now we know in part; now we see in

part, but then face to face. Then we shall be satisfied. *Planted* in the house of the Lord, we shall flourish in the courts of our God. (Psalm xcii. 13.)

And yet more, faith can even now lay such hold of that satisfying portion as to render us "full content" with our earthly position, however little and lowly it may be, and to still the fevered cravings of the natural heart for ever.

"It is enough: Thy tender smile,
Till I behold Thee there,
Shall cheer me through the little while
I'm waiting for Thee here."

THE CHURCH OF PERGAMOS.

REV. ii. 12-17.

GREAT and many had been the persecutions of the Church of Pergamos. They had verily endured a great fight of afflictions, had borne and suffered for the name of Christ, and had resisted even unto blood.

They were dwelling in a place which the Lord describes as Satan's seat, where he evidently exercised especial power, and used it all against these feeble sheep, but they stood firm and steadfast.

Even in the face of death, they would not deny their Lord. Possessions, friends, yea life itself might be torn from them, but still they clung to Christ. His name was precious to them, they would not give it up. He was their Lord, their Saviour, the well-beloved of their souls, the One on whom their every hope was fixed. What could they do without their Lord? What was this world to them? They felt they had no portion here. Their joys, their hopes, were all above. They were but pilgrims passing onwards—worn and footsore travellers, longing to reach their home, and naught could tempt them to deny their Lord.

They were a heaven-born people, redeemed with

precious, precious blood; and He who loved and washed them from their sins, sustained and cheered them through their troubled path. His eye was on them, watching to impart the needed strength. He knew how to revive their souls; and so revealed Himself, and gave such glimpses of the coming glory, that they counted their trials light, and could rejoice in the persecutions which they endured.

True it is, that the blood of the saints is the seed of the Church; and Satan proved it to be so. His malice only made them stronger. His fury only made them cleave more closely to their Lord. So, as the cunning serpent, he changed his tactics, and tried another plan.

He could not terrify—perhaps he may *beguile*. Torture and cruelty did not avail; may-be soft words and honied speeches will have more effect. So persecution waned, and a deceitful calm ensued. The enemy appeared convinced and softened, ready to make a truce, to hold out the right hand of fellowship, instead of fighting unto death.

The snare prevailed. The Christians were entrapped: and though they would not yield to force, they were overcome by the fair words and looks of those who knew not Christ, and were induced to forego the holy separation which He had enjoined, and to turn aside from full obedience to His word.

Their previous faithfulness had been seen and prized by their Lord, and was not forgotten. It was written in His book of remembrance, to be recompensed in that day when He will reward every man according to his works: and now in their hour of danger, He reminds them of it, and thus seeks to stimulate them to renewed devotedness and love.

How precious also are those words of Christ—"I know thy works, and where thou dwellest." He knows all the peculiar circumstances and trials which surround us. None of them have come upon us by chance.

All have been ordered and permitted by His unerring wisdom and love. In His tender solicitude for our richest blessing, He has fixed the bounds of our habitation.

Throughout the earth His earnest eye
Hath careful searched, to see
What place it was beneath the sky
That *best* befitted thee.

He is training us for glory, and the pressure around us—though oftentimes hard to bear—is the best, the gentlest, and the most effectual way of accomplishing His blessed and glorious purpose concerning us.

The address to the Church of Pergamos is a special warning to us. Satan's great effort *now* is to seduce the saints of God, to draw them into a half-hearted path, to lead them to make a league with the world, and give up some of the holy requirements of their Lord and Master, in exchange for some of this world's indulgences or glory. May His solemn words to this Church come with mighty power to our souls, and strengthen us to resist the strong current of worldliness which is carrying so many of the Lord's people headlong.

"I have a few things against thee." A *few* things: He would not dishearten them: the leaven was only beginning to work, it could yet be purged out; the evil was still in the bud, it could easily be nipped off.

"Because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam." The doctrine of Balaam consisted in this—he professed to be a servant of God, but was ever ready to *disobey* Him for reward or honour.

"Who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." This subject is usually looked at as referring only to religious teachers, but let us consider it in its spiritual and practical application to individual Christians. If we read Balaam's history (see Num. xxv.—xxx., xxxi. 8) we find that

though he knew the Lord's will, he was very desirous, for his own ends, to set it aside.

Foiled in his desire to curse Israel, he taught Balac to feign friendship with them, to encourage his people to invite them to their religious feasts, and thus to tempt them to idolatry, fornication, and forbidden marriages. Balaam's object was to lead Israel into sin, and thus to provoke the Lord to anger. His device succeeded. The Israelites were beguiled; they turned aside from the holy commandments which had been delivered unto them, and ventured to enjoy the fleshly indulgences which were offered them, and the result was that twenty-four thousand died of a plague from the Lord.

Is not this a special snare of the present day? The Lord's word to His redeemed ones is—“Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” “Come out from among them, and be ye separate . . . and touch not the unclean thing.” “The friendship of the world is enmity with God.” And yet how often instead of coming out and being separate, God's holy and peculiar people venture to mix with the world, as if they were of it: and is not *this* spiritual adultery—a forsaking of the living God for idols?

“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,” and if we make light even of one of God's commandments, we shall gradually look upon sin with a more indulgent eye, and thus be easily led into varied forms of disobedience, such as indulging in forbidden things, entering into forbidden pleasures, or doing what is right in our own eyes, instead of seeking to have every thought and feeling, word and act, brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

How varied are the temptations to disobey the Lord for the sake of earthly gain—money, glory, fame, praise. All such tampering with sin is hateful to Him.

It is the doctrine of Balaam. It defiles the conscience, brings a cloud between the soul and Christ, and thus destroys spiritual joy and strength. How much of our spiritual weariness and depression may be traced to this cause.

“So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.” This was perhaps a second snare for some who escaped the first, some wilful perversion of the Lord’s commandments, which led to independence or disobedience. He has redeemed us to *Himself*, that we might be holy, even as He is holy, to love what He loves, and to hate what He hates, and any thing that leads to independence or carelessness of walk in any matter is abhorrent to Him.

“Repent.”—Such is His solemn word to us as well as to them. Let us give heed to it, and seek *at once* to cleanse our hands and purify our hearts, that our ways may be acceptable and well-pleasing unto Him.

“Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly.” What is so precious to us as the Lord’s presence and power? What brings such joy and gladness with it? And yet here His coming to them is put in the form of a threat! How solemn this is. How loudly it speaks of the bitter fruits of indulging in sin.

The careless, disobedient son finds no pleasure in his father’s presence. He would rather keep out of his sight. And the child of God, who dares wilfully to disobey Him shrinks from His presence, and is afraid of His voice. The Lord preserve us from such a state of heart.

“And will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.” The Lord Jesus presents Himself to this Church as the One who hath “the sharp sword with two edges.” (*v.* 12.) This was their special need. They had neglected to use that mighty weapon, the sword of the Spirit, (see 2 Cor. x. 4, 5; Heb. iv. 12, 13,) and therefore evil had grown apace. They needed

its keen edge to cut away their carnal thoughts and feelings, to divide between flesh and spirit, and to enable them to discern the subtle lies of their crafty enemy.

But mark the exceeding tenderness and grace of our holy loving Lord. He does not say, I will fight against *thee*—the Church, but against *them*—the holders of these doctrines, who were seducing the Church. His sword is *for* His Church, but against His enemies. His people *required* the sword, and its use might be very painful to them, but still it was *for* them, and would only be used to remove that which oppressed and hindered them in their heavenly race; while to the mere professor of His truth it must be a sword of fearful judgment.

Then comes His word of cheer and promise, so calculated to strengthen any one who cared to hear His voice. “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”

Is there one who will resist the temptation to indulge in forbidden things? To such an one the Lord *Himself* will give to eat of the good things which He has in store, the hidden manna—the deep and unknown secrets of His love and grace :

“Secret blessings, richly flowing,
Fresh from God’s exhaustless tide.”

Is there one who will seek to preserve the character of the chaste virgin espoused unto Christ? To him shall be given the white stone, with the new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it—the secret revelations of the Lord’s love and favour, which will so fill and satisfy all the cravings of his heart that he will count all things else but dross and dung.

These promises are no fable; no mere form of words;

but the present actual possession of those who seek to follow the Lord fully, and will also be their rich and special portion to all eternity. Only let us be true to Him, and He will feed us with the richest spiritual food, and manifest Himself to us in a way and manner that cannot possibly be known to another.

The stream of worldliness is very strong around us; and, sad to say, habitual disobedience to the Lord in many things abounds in the Church of God. Let us then lay these words to heart; and instead of being beguiled and ensnared, let us seek to walk in all holy obedience and godliness, and thus rejoice and glorify Him who says—"IF YE LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS."

A THOUGHT ON THE BURNT OFFERING.

THE ascension or burnt offering is a type of Christ in ascension after the cross, and upon the ground of the cross. The atonement, as presented in the words, "he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to *make atonement* for him," is the believer's identification with Christ.

The fire is God in His holiness feeding upon or delighting in the risen Man, the Head of the body.

The animal was roasted to draw out the savour, which having been done, it was replaced by another, for the law made nothing perfect.

The offering was an uninterrupted one (see Ex. xxix. 38-42; Lev. vi. 9-13; Num. xxviii. 2-6), a type of One who has *uninterruptedly* sat down at the right hand of God, His *once for all* sin-offering on the cross being accomplished. A literal translation of Lev. i. shews this clearly, revealing the true *odour of rest* to God and the saint. He who thus believes enters into *rest*, the rest left over to the people of God.

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.

WHAT a life the Lord Jesus spent here upon this earth! How feebly we realize it! “*The man Christ Jesus*” walking through this hostile scene, enduring the contradiction of sinners against Himself, though they were the very ones whom He left the brightness of the Father’s glory, and all the unspeakable joys of heaven, and came down to the desolate shores of a ruined world, to “save.” But they “saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him.”

As one very truly writes, “In His relationships to the world which was around Him, we see Him at once a *conqueror*, a *sufferer*, and a *benefactor*. What mortal glories shine in such an assemblage! He overcame the world, refusing all its attractions; He suffered from it, bearing witness against its whole course; He blest it, dispensing the fruit of His grace and power incessantly. Its temptations only made Him a conqueror; its pollutions and enmities a sufferer; its miseries only a benefactor! What a combination!”

Pain and suffering, looking to Him, were at once relieved. *Sorrow*, tracking His footsteps, got sympathy and comfort. *Sin*, crouching at His feet, was not spurned away with a harsh rebuke—but met with compassionate words of acquittal. *Death* itself had to yield up its power in His presence, who was Himself the Resurrection and the Life. Such was *Jesus*—“the man Christ Jesus”—who is 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.

No earthly tongue can half describe
His sympathy and tender love;
The ceaseless watchfulness and care
With which He guards thee from above.

He never changes—never dies—
He knows no lack of power or skill;
His smile illumines the darkest cloud,
His presence every blank can fill.

THE GRACE OF GOD A LIFE DISCIPLINE.

PART I.

How much is contained in the expression, "The grace of God!" and what unspeakably precious assurances have we for time and eternity in that name, "The God of all grace!"

When we remember how undeserved by us are all His mercies, and how unreserved are all His bestowals—having blessed us with *all* spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus—we may well, with the apostle, exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God!" As we ponder these depths, and seek to fathom the exceeding riches of this grace, it becomes us to see that we do not in any thing misunderstand that grace in which we stand, or abuse the exceeding love of God towards us.

Grace is the undeserved actings of love towards those who have no claim upon it. Thus "the love of God" to us as sinners is exhibited in "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," the object of which is to lead us into "the communion of the Holy Ghost;" and the end of all God's dealings is to draw us so near to Himself that His love may find a response, and that thus He may be able to hold fellowship infinitely beyond what otherwise would have been possible either for God or for the creature.

This necessitates what *creation* never could accomplish—our participation of "the divine nature." Thus God finds a rest for His love, and will eventually perfect His great design—to gather from the ruin of the fall those who shall be His children, the begotten ones of God, who as priests in the heavenly temple shall see Him face to face, and become the channels of blessing to all the creation of God in heaven and on earth.

Such is the purpose of the grace of God; and it is

needful to understand this as God's end, if we would apprehend what the grace of God contemplates for us. God has told us His design, that in some measure we may be able to follow His hand in leading us, and not misunderstand the discipline of the way.

The grace of God *begins* with our salvation. Till that is secured, all the ultimate thoughts of the heart of God can find no room for their display. But while it begins with saving the sinner, and justifying the ungodly, it does not *end* there. This we have strikingly brought out in the Epistle to Titus, ii. 11-14, where the apostle writes :

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared” (ἐπεφάνη, hath forth-shined), “teaching [or disciplining*] us, in order that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present age (αἰών); looking for that blessed hope, the appearing” (ἐπιφάνειαν, *i.e.* the forth-shining, the epiphany) “of the glory of the great God and of our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, in order that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Our object is not to dwell on the grace that saves, but on the grace that disciplines; not on the first act of infinite love that brings us to the fold, but on its after workings towards ends that are no less positive and determined.

As in Matthew xi. 28, 29, rest *given* is distinct from rest *found* (for the “yoke” lies between them), so the

* The word here used for *teaching* is παιδεύειν, which signifies *to train up a child*, and hence to educate, discipline, and instruct. (See 1 Cor. xi. 32; Heb. xii. 6, 7, 10; Rev. iii. 19.) In the same sense we have the substantive παιδεία, rendered “nurture” (Eph. vi. 4), “instruction” (2 Tim. iii. 16), “chastening” (Heb. xii. 5, 7, 8, 11); but in such passages the general idea of *training* is preferable to these limited significations, all of which are, however, included in the training needed for a child. The verb is derived from παῖς, a child.

receiving Christ as all in all, "the unspeakable gift" of God to us as needy sinners, is distinct from the realizing of Christ as the all in all of the soul in its daily needs and daily conflicts. Sooner or later rest *given* ends in rest *found*; and grace is likewise progressive.

Grace that has no training or disciplining power has no saving power; it is like that faith which, having no works, is dead, being alone. Let the careless ponder, and the slothful tremble; for God has no comforts in His word for such.

The main idea in these verses is apparently not the *salvation* of grace, but its discipline. The word "for," with which the clause begins, connects it with what had gone before. And what was that but a record of the *requirements* of the grace of God as addressed to aged men and aged women, to young women and to young men, in the church of Christ, concluding with an especial exhortation to servants? These all seem to be summed up in the concluding words of the tenth verse—"that they may adorn the doctrine" (*i. e.* the teaching they have received) "of God our Saviour in all things."

This is the point to be aimed at, and the enforcing of this in the ministry of the word fulfils the command, "Speak thou the things which become sound doctrine."*

The life of the Christian is to beautify the teachings of God in the eyes of those who behold, "that those of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say." Each believer should make true in his own experience the confession of Daniel's enemies—"We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God."

What a witness to moral uprightness and truth is

* Or "*healthy teaching*;" for, alas! teaching may be theologically very orthodox, and really very far from "sound," if the due proportion of truth be lost sight of. This calls for thought in all who teach.

contained in that confession! and yet nothing less ought to mark the life of every child of God, as far as it lies within the cognizance of those who are without. There are spiritualities in the Christian's life which none but the spiritual can discern or appreciate; but in the natural relations and circumstances of life which the world estimates (and often more correctly than the Church) the Christian ought so to cause his light to shine, that the world may bear witness to him and to his God.

Discipline has special regard to our relation as children to our heavenly Father; and if we are without it, we are proved to be bastards and not sons. But discipline from God involves our being exercised by it if we are to profit. The training or nurture of the Lord is not an occasional putting forth of His hand, but the constant, ever-present activity of His grace, wherein He never loses sight of us.

To this ever-present discipline of God Job alludes when he asks, "What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? and that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?" (vii. 17, 18.)

Well may the Christian also ask, in wonder and in love, What am I, that the God of grace who saved me should be my constant guide and instructor, training in patience and in long-suffering one so wilful and so dull?

But so it is, "every morning," and "every moment," the ceaseless watchfulness of love keeps in view the objects of its care, leading, it may be slowly but surely, up to the highest platform of spiritual and heavenly glory, that those whom His love has redeemed may become a treasure "peculiarly His own," though all in heaven and in earth are His.

The grace of God meets us as sinners, and saves us from the eternal condemnation of sin, and then, as we carry sin within us, it becomes our teacher, and

tells us what to deny—even ungodliness and worldly desires. The disciple of the Lord is told to deny *himself*, but here, as if to specify particularly the points to be kept in view, the apostle names ungodliness and worldly desires.

We will not stop now to enter into details, though we may allude to them hereafter; but may the Spirit of God reveal to each heart its besetting ungodliness and worldliness, and then may each be able to lay the axe to the root of the besetment, though it be useful as a right hand, or dear as a right eye. It is, however, deeply important to remember that in the very forefront of obedience is the denial of *self*; the setting it aside in its will, its ways, its purposes; and that not in any particular form only, but *as a whole*.

The opposite of this we see working in the apostacy, where, first and foremost in the terrible catalogue of its characteristics, Paul says, "Men shall be lovers of their own selves" (*φιλαυτοι*).

Sin began with self. Man thought he could love himself more than God loved him. Grace begins where sin began; grace teaches us that, because God so loves and cares for us, we are to deny ourselves, and to own and love God instead of self. This is the *negative* side of our training, and we are then prepared to learn how we ought to "live." This the apostle sums up in three characteristics,—"*soberly, righteously, and godly.*" Soberly in all that concerns ourselves, righteously in all that affects our relation to others, and godly in all that concerns our God.

A few words are needful on these three important expressions, which characterize the Christian life that the grace of God is training us to lead.

Soberness means properly having a right mind as opposed to an insane mind. Thus the man out of whom the devils were cast was said to be then "in his right mind" (Mark v. 15, Luke viii. 35), the same word as is here and elsewhere used for being sober. So

when Paul is charged with being mad, he replies in those memorable words, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and *soberness*." He had taken God's estimate of things, and therefore he could but speak soberly.

This is perhaps the best definition of soberness as used in the New Testament. It goes far beyond the meaning of the word as used among ourselves, and when rightly understood presents to our thoughts this important truth, that to be "sober" we must have the mind of Christ, and taking His estimate of everything around us, act accordingly. All else is madness and folly. He only lives soberly who weighs everything in the balances of the sanctuary, and acts in accord with their divine standard.

Oh, what a change would be made in many of our plans, purposes, and thoughts, in the arrangement of our persons, our houses, and our business, if each and all were brought to this test, and nothing allowed that did not pass this ordeal! But how glorious would be the result! How bright the expectations, how buoyant the hopes, how calm and peaceful the experiences that would be the portion of those who had thus learned to live!

Righteousness as connected with our intercourse one with another involves our walking in the steps of the righteous God in all His dealings with ourselves. The tongue, the hand, the foot, and the heart have all to be in subjection to those holy principles of right which embrace both justice and goodness, and have been revealed to us in the life and walk of our Master.

The righteousness of the Christian is contained in the sermon on the mount, which through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in him becomes "the perfect law of liberty," obedience to which is perfect freedom. In our actings and dealings, whether in the Church or in the world, we can, alas! be but too painfully conscious how miserably we fail. In word so hasty, in

hand so hard, and in heart oftentimes so unforbearing and unloving.

We may do well to ponder over our Saviour's solemn words, "Unless your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." And what was the measure of their righteousness? To love those that loved them; to do good to those that did good to them. But to His disciples the Lord says, "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." This is what is meant by living righteously, and therein to be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect.

Lastly, we are trained to *godliness*, and we are told that all who desire to "live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

Godliness (*εισέβεια*) is that which characterizes the devout man (*εισεβής*), and implies that which should ever exist between the Creator and the creature, and deeper still between the Father and the child. It includes worship, homage, reverence, and honour, and if these be wanting the ultimate end of the discipline of grace has not been attained.

When sin entered into the world, the moral relation between man and God was broken; the tie that gratefully bound dependent man to his Creator was sundered; so that when He appeared in the garden, man fled and hid himself from His presence. Grace is God's remedy whereby to restore this relation, and to fix it upon an eternal and immutable basis, and godliness marks the climax to which our training is ever directed.

Sobriety in ourselves and righteousness with our fellows but prepares us for the highest of all our spiritual attainments—to *live godly*; and what is this

but humbling ourselves to walk with God, as we read in Micah vi. 8? (*See margin.*)

Yet how strange that God should speak of that which is the creature's highest honour and glory as if it were an act of humiliation—"to humble himself to walk with God!" But God knows the pride of the alienated heart. God knows what it will cost any man who wants to walk with Him—what self-renunciation, what a presenting of the body "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable." All this is necessary to enable us to prove and to experience the will of God, to be "good, acceptable, and perfect." Then, and not till then, will it be possible to walk humbly with God, as being nothing at all, and having our God at our side in fact, and not only in theory, as our all in all. This is godliness.

It is remarkable how often this word occurs in the pastoral epistles to Timothy and Titus. The Greek words for "godliness" and "godly" occur thirteen times in those epistles, and only nine times in all the New Testament besides.

The "form of godliness" without the power (as we learn from 2 Tim. iii. 5) was coming in, and many were thinking that "godliness was gain," (as the passage in 1 Tim. vi. 5 should be rendered, not "gain is godliness,") and therefore Paul seeks to instruct the "man of God" as to the reality of godliness, and says, "Great is the mystery of godliness."

This mystery we conceive to be the mystery of regeneration, which had its antecedent in the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God. Thereby God brings man from a condition of enmity into the nearest and closest relation to Himself and His eternal glory; and this mystery was accomplished by means of Him who was "manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit," &c. This mystery, as an inworking power in the heart of all who believe, leads to godliness.

These then are the three grand points in the life-

training of the child of God “*in this present world,*” as is emphatically added. We are too prone to contemplate these things as among the far-off possibilities of the world to come, and not as the present realizations of a living faith.

“COME YE YOURSELVES APART.”

“Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile.”

MARK VI. 31.

“COME ye yourselves apart,
 And rest awhile;”
 So spake the gracious Lord,
 With gracious smile.
 What soul-refreshing thoughts
 The words suggest:
 “Come ye yourselves apart”
 With Me, “and rest!”

“Come ye yourselves apart,”
 And tell Me all
 That you have done and taught
 Since that last call;
 Since last I sent you forth
 To work for Me,
 Amid the haunts of sin
 And misery.

“Come ye yourselves apart,”
 And do not fear
 To tell Me all your thoughts—
 I love to hear!
 Begin where you left off;
 Leave nothing out;
 Tell Me each word and work,
 Each hope and doubt.

“Come ye yourselves apart,”
 And listen, too;
 For I have many things
 To say to you.
 I want to let you know
 What I have thought
 Of all this work for Me
 That you have wrought.

“COME YE YOURSELVES APART.”

“Come ye yourselves apart,”
 That I may teach.
 The many, many things,
 You have to preach.
 You cannot learn them all
 In one short day ;
 But something may be learnt,
 If you will stay.

“Come ye yourselves apart,”
 I care for you ;
 Not for the sake of aught
 That you can do :
 Your work is very poor
 And weak, at best ;
 But ye yourselves are dear :
 Then come, and rest !

“Come ye yourselves apart ;”
 Renew your strength,
 That you may better go
 Prepared at length,
 By holy leisure spent
 Alone with Me,
 To work the work prepared
 For thee—for thee !

And when the closing hour
 Of Life's short day
 Shall tell of earthly work
 All passed away,
 I will draw near, and say,
 With loving smile,
 Fear not ; but come apart,
 And rest—awhile !

Rest, rest with Me, awhile,
 In Paradise,
 Till He who bade thee rest,
 Shall bid thee rise !
 Then rise with quickened powers,
 To spend for Me
 That blessed leisure-time,
 Eternity !

IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS.

PERHAPS there is no doctrine so little entered into, or so little enjoyed by Christians, as that of the righteousness imputed to the believer by faith in Christ Jesus, whilst there is none more clearly and definitely set forth in the Holy Scriptures by *type*, by *inference*, and by bold *proclamation*.

It must not be confounded with forgiveness of sins, which is the result of Christ's death for us. He died instead of us, bore our sins, suffered our punishment that we might be acquitted, justified from the consequence as well as the power of sin. But more than that, we may know that we are looked upon *in Him*, arrayed in all the perfection of His holy blameless life, and with holy boldness we can prostrate ourselves before the footstool of Almighty God, our heavenly Father, assured that His thoughts toward us are those of the bridegroom in the Song of Songs—"Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." (iv. 7.)

We will consider one or two of the *types* in which this glorious doctrine is foreshadowed.

When God clothed Adam and Eve in coats of skins, He taught them the need of a sacrifice for sins, and of a covering in which to appear in His presence, provided by another. "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them." (Gen. iii. 21.)

Here we have in *type* the great doctrine of imputed righteousness set forth; the sinner not only provided with an atoning sacrifice, but also with a robe which enables him to appear before our holy God. The robe which God provided was an effectual covering, because *He* provided it, just as the apron of fig-leaves was an ineffectual covering, because man provided it. God's coat was founded upon blood-shedding—Adam's was not. When Adam was clothed in the coat of skins he

had no need to say, "I was naked, and I hid myself." He could rest perfectly content, for he knew that it was God who had clothed him, and the dress which he wore fully satisfied all the requirements of infinite holiness.

We have the same glorious truth typified in the burnt-offering, where the offerer laid His hands upon the burnt-offering, and it was accepted for him. It then ceased to be a question of what he *was* or what he *deserved*, and became a question of what the offering was in the judgment of God. Was the offering without blemish? So was the offerer. Was the offering accepted? So was the offerer.

We would here draw special attention to the different effect produced by the imposition of hands in the burnt-offering and in the sin-offering. In Leviticus i. 4 we read, "And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering, and it shall be accepted for him." In chapter iv. 4, "He shall lay his hand upon the bullock's head, and *kill* the bullock before the Lord." Here is not one word of acceptance; death alone is the sentence pronounced. The offering is treated as the offerer should be.

Some may ask, But why this difference? Because they represent two phases in the work of our Saviour Jesus. In the first, we behold Him as the spotless One, presenting Himself to the eye and heart of the Father, delighting to do His will, and glorify Him on the earth. In the second, we see Him as the sin-bearer, dying on the accursed tree, meeting the depths of human need, and satisfying the justice of an offended God.

Another type of this glorious righteousness is found in the high priest's dress, which is all emblematical of the work, character and office of our great High Priest, who is for us entered into the holy place not made with hands.

In Exodus xxviii. 9 we read, "And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the

children of Israel, six of their names on one stone, and the other six names of the rest on the other stone, according to their birth." In verse 12, "And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel; and Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial." In verse 15 and following, we read of the breastplate on which also were engraved on twelve precious stones the names of the twelve tribes of Israel which Aaron was to bear "upon his heart before the Lord continually."

The least, as well as the greatest of the tribes was borne upon the breast and shoulders of the high priest, and presented before God in all the lustre and effulgence of precious stones. Whatever the failings and infirmities of the people, still their names glittered in the breastplate and on the shoulders with unfading brilliancy, and Jehovah beheld them only as precious jewels. No one could dim their brightness, nor enter the holy of holies to snatch them from the high priest's breast.

Tried and sorrowing Christian, there is comfort here for you. Are you cast down because of your sins? fearing, trembling with oft-repeated failures? often doubting your acceptance, looking in upon self, instead of "off unto Jesus"? Fear not, but remember that God sees you only on the heart of Jesus—the jewels are always there; though you may not see them, God sees them, and that is enough. He beholds you in all the splendour of reflected glory, reflected from that pure and holy Being in whom was no guile, no thought or shadow of sin.

This blessed truth may be *inferred* from many passages both in the Old and New Testaments. In Isaiah lxi. 10, the prophet gives utterance to the joyful assurance which faith in Jesus ever calls forth, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God." Then he gives the reason, "For He hath

clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness."

In Zechariah iii. we find Joshua the high priest clothed in filthy garments, but the angel of the Lord took away the filthy garments, and gave him a change of raiment.

The same doctrine is inferred in the parable of the marriage of the king's son, where one of the guests is found without a wedding garment. The dress was provided, but he did not choose to wear it; he preferred to seek an entrance in the garments of his own making. He soon finds his mistake, and a fearful doom awaits him. To the marriage feast of the Lamb nothing impure, nothing unholy, is suffered to approach; the wedding garment must be donned, that robe of spotless righteousness provided for each blood-bought guest.

The parable of the prodigal son furnishes us with another inference that this robe is provided for us by a loving Father's care. When his father met him a great way off, and fell on his neck and kissed him, he gave command to his servant to bring forth the best robe and put it on him. Thus he who was found destitute, hungry, weary, footsore and naked, was made worthy to enter his father's mansion and share his father's honour.

In conclusion, we notice that this precious doctrine is boldly *proclaimed* in the Scriptures of truth. Passages innumerable might be adduced in proof of this assertion, but space will only permit us to glance at a few.

In Isaiah liv. 17, the prophet gives some special promises for our comfort and encouragement amidst trials and conflicts, and concludes with these gracious words—"This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

St. Paul in his epistles speaks very forcibly of this

righteousness, which is imputed to every child of God by faith. In his epistle to the Romans, chap. iv., he shows that justification is by faith, and not of works, that righteousness was imputed to Abraham before he received the sign of circumcision, "that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed unto them also." Again, in chap. x. 4:—"Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Writing to the Philippians, he reminds them in what he might have gloried, numbering up his many advantages, but now he casts all these aside that he might win Christ, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ.

Perhaps there is no more beautiful illustration of this glorious doctrine, nor one which speaks more forcibly to the human heart than that given by the prophet Jeremiah, in which he unfolds to us our blessings under the simile of a bride, giving her the title, honour, and position which she can claim in virtue of her husband. In chap. xxiii. he speaks of the righteous Branch, which shall arise and reign, and shall be called "The Lord our righteousness;" and in chapter xxxiii. he gives the same name to those who are Christ's—"This is the name whereby *she* shall be called, The Lord our righteousness."

This righteousness is not only glorious, because, in spite of all our personal deformities and imperfections, it presents us spotless before God; but it is glorious because it exalts the believer to an infinitely higher position than our first parents ever occupied in paradise.

If Adam had never broken that only command which God gave him, he could have claimed immunity from punishment, but he never could have claimed the position of a son of God in Christ Jesus. If it were

possible for any of us to keep the whole law of God in thought, word, and deed, we should still be unprofitable servants, having done only what it was our duty to do. But having been made one with Christ, and clothed in His righteousness, we *can* and *do* claim something more than immunity from punishment. We claim to be the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty; we claim an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; we claim a portion in heaven, a position before God higher, infinitely higher, than any angel or archangel can ever occupy. We shall stand nearer to the throne than the angels, for they stand there in their own righteousness, but we shall stand in the righteousness of the only-begotten Son of God, in whom not one blot, one stain, one blemish ever was or could be.

"THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT."

It is impossible to think or speak too much of the love of the Father in giving His only begotten Son to be the sacrifice for our sins; nor can we overstate or overvalue the rich and precious love of our beloved Lord Jesus in giving Himself for us; but are we not very prone to forget the love of the Holy Spirit of God?

Do we consider His amazing condescension in taking up His abode within us? the patience with which He bears with all our ingratitude and evil? the gentleness with which He leads us on in the divine life? the grace with which He ministers to our continual need? and the faithful love which induces Him to remain with us in spite of all our provocations and rebellion?

"The love of the Spirit," how great, how full it is! He is that other Comforter—the joint gift of the Father and the Son—who delights to lead us into the enjoyment of all the spiritual blessings which are laid up for us in Christ Jesus our Lord, our Head. He

has come down to this world of sinners to search out and prepare the bride for God's beloved Son; and He becomes the faithful Sustainer and Instructor of those who yield themselves to His gracious power.

We get a faint type of His blessed ministry in Eliezer's conduct when he went in search of a bride for Isaac. (Read Gen. xxiv.)

Like Abraham's servant, the Holy Spirit speaks not of Himself, but takes of the things of Jesus, and shows them to us, enriching us with heavenly treasures, alluring our souls from the things of earth, and winning our affections for Christ Himself. Like him, too, he hastens us from our own people and our father's house, entreating us to come out and be separate, that we may be a holy and peculiar people unto our God. And also, like him, He undertakes to be our Guide and Protector, all through the wilderness, and promises to bring us safe home to our own “Isaac”—our true joy and “laughter”—the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

It is *He* who convinces of sin and attracts the poor troubled one to Jesus. “When He is come, He will convince the world of sin.”

It is *He* who quickens the soul into life. “It is the Spirit who quickeneth.” “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

By *Him* we are “baptized . . . into one body,” and thus become members of the body of Christ, and are eternally united to Him as our living Head.

Upon believing we are “sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,” and He is thus God's personal seal upon us, marking and separating us as God's own peculiar possession and purchased people.

He is the indwelling Spirit, who, in rich and condescending grace, takes up His abode within us. “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God?”

Such truths may well stagger us, they are so grand, so marvellous! but faith listens, receives, and worships; yea more, faith delights in this glorious portion, which flows to us—because of the infinite value of the precious blood of Christ.

We read of the holy anointing oil (which typifies the Spirit of God), that "upon man's flesh shall it not be poured" (Exodus xxx. 32), and yet *after* the sons of Aaron had been washed, clothed, and consecrated by the blood, Moses was commanded to sprinkle that holy oil both upon them and upon their garments. (Exodus xxix. 21.)

So now, when a poor sinner has been cleansed in the blood of Christ and clothed with His righteousness, the Holy Ghost not only seals but takes possession of him, and dwells within him. "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

He is the "Spirit of truth," who is given to us to testify of Jesus, to guide us into all truth, and to show us things to come; and did we yield ourselves to His teaching, we should know far more of the force of those words, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." He would teach us to abide in Jesus, and abiding in Him, we should walk in the light of God, and be able to discern between truth and error.

It is *He* who sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts, and is thus the communicator of all our peace, and joy, and gladness.

He also teaches us to pray, helping our infirmities, showing us what we need, and enabling us to pour out our hearts before our God; and often indeed He makes intercession for us Himself, with groanings which cannot be uttered. (Rom. viii. 26.)

It is He also who separates and consecrates us for God's service, who distributes the varied gifts which Christ has bestowed for the edification of His Church (see Eph. iv. 7–13, and 1 Cor. xii.), and empowers us

to use them for God's glory and the blessing of His people.

Such are a few—a very few—of the things in which, as children of God, we are dependent upon the Spirit. And what heed we should give to that solemn and gracious admonition—"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

His faithfulness and love are such that He will *never* leave us. Not all our wilfulness and sin can drive Him from our breast: but, alas! how He is grieved! Sin is a hateful, loathsome thing to Him. He is the *Holy Spirit*, and as the gentle dove He folds His wings and groans within us if we *indulge* in sin. But still He will not leave us. No, He has pledged Himself to bring us safely home to Christ. He will not break His word, but as the faithful monitor, He speaks *within*. He speaks *reprovingly*. He will not let us rest. He tells us of our sin, and strives to draw us back to God. He does not cast us off, but our joy is gone; our peace is lost; we are shut out from fellowship with Christ, and have to prove the bitter fruits of sin, the wretchedness of distance from our God. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked;" and true indeed is this of wayward, wandering saints.

O that we were wise; that we understood this; that we considered our ways, and sought to walk humbly with our God! What gainers we should be! How deep the peace we should know! How full and unhindered the joy! And what strength we should receive, through the inworking of the Holy Ghost, to abound in every good word and work.

But more than this, the Holy Ghost is not only the indwelling Spirit to every individual believer; He is also God's gift to the Church *collectively*, as we read in 1 Cor. iii. 16—"Know ye not that *ye* (the church at Corinth) are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

Not only does the Holy Ghost distribute distinctive gifts in the Church of God, "dividing to every man severally as He will," but we also read, "All these *worketh* that one and the self-same Spirit." There may be much will-worship and ministry of the truth, which is the fruit of man's natural power and intelligence, but such service is not well-pleasing or acceptable to God. The Holy Ghost is the *alone* power for worship or ministry, so that we are dependent, *entirely dependent*, upon Him for the *profitable use* of any gift we may have received for the blessing of saint or sinner.

When the Lord Jesus Himself was dwelling upon earth, He was led of the Spirit, and spoke and acted as empowered by the Holy Ghost. As the obedient servant we hear Him say:—"The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself;" and again, "I do nothing of myself, but as my Father hath taught me I speak these things;" and even after His resurrection He, through the Holy Ghost, gave commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen. (Acts i. 2.)

This is a great mystery, and calls for our adoring worship; but surely, if the Lord Jesus when on earth only spake by the Holy Ghost, how important it must be that all *present* ministry of the truth should be under the leading, and in the power of the Spirit of God.

If *He* who was perfect in wisdom and knowledge waited morning by morning to hear as the learner, that He might know how to speak a word in season to him that was weary (see Isaiah l. 4), how futile and valueless must be all our efforts to speak of Jesus, unless we also are instructed and enabled by the Holy Ghost.

Surely we need increasingly to lay these truths to heart, and to wait on the Lord with that humble listening ear which would discern the Spirit's leading. Our worship *should* be in the Spirit and of the Spirit,

and the mere energy and activity of the flesh is not acceptable to God; indeed, everything connected with His service and worship is of no real profit, unless it be in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

We read of some who were "*filled* with the Holy Ghost, and with power;" and there is the same rich and full supply for us now. We are not straitened in our God. He is the same, He changeth not; and He is able and willing to make all grace abound towards us.

Let us, then, seek for a further "supply of the Spirit of Christ" (Phil. i. 19), that we also may "*be filled* with the Spirit;" and then we shall not only be empowered and fitted for the Lord's service, but we shall practically know far more of what it is to "walk in the Spirit," and "not fulfil the lust of the flesh;" and building up ourselves on our most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, we shall keep ourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. (Jude 20, 21.)

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST.

IN addition to the various features which have been noticed relative to this deeply interesting and instructive portion of the history of our Lord Jesus Christ, there are yet other circumstances connected therewith of the greatest importance.

In the narrative of the fall of our first parents we cannot but notice the skill with which the tempter adapted his artifices to entangle the innocent and unsuspecting mind of Eve.

Allurements such as he is in the habit of presenting to the children of men in our day would have been to her destitute of attractiveness. Situated as our first parents were in Paradise, with every want amply supplied, and no human beings but themselves, there would have been no inducement to violate any one of

the prohibitions of the Decalogue, if it had been then given, or any other moral principle.

The devil takes objects familiar to her—the beauty of the fruit, the as yet untasted sweetness of it, heightened by the announcement previously made by God Himself, that it contained the power of imparting a knowledge beyond what they then possessed. In the most simple way was the eye appealed to, the appetite, and the desire for increase of knowledge; in themselves all perfectly harmless. But when such exercise of these natural desires was forbidden by God, the transgression was sin—the sin which brought with it death to them and their posterity.

By thus yielding, man became the slave of Satan. Placed in the possession of all that his heart could desire, and in friendly intercourse with his Creator God, from whom he could obtain whatever information he might wish, he was yet unable to resist the craft of the adversary. Eve was deceived; Adam was overcome through her. Both knew they were doing wrong.

Satan has had since then long experience in the arts of deceit, and has ever shown the surprising ingenuity wherewith he adapts his selection of weapons and modes of attack to the special condition of the soul of each person at the time of the assault.

To the gross and sensual it would be useless to present ideas of a higher order than the indulgence of the bodily appetites. The intellectual are presented with baits of a description suited to the particular phase of their character, and in the direction of their objects. The man of business is plied with inducements in the way of trade. The warrior is invited to grasp at honours and emoluments to be obtained in the exercise of his vocation. The moral man is beguiled into a persuasion of his own worthiness.

Even the soul that has been brought nigh to God through Christ, far from being exempted from such assaults, is only the more an object of the artifices of

the enemy, who ever strives to mislead the servant of Christ, that so he may bring dishonour on his Master. Each of us is aware how often, by what seems to be the natural and necessary course of events, we have been brought to a point when suddenly we have found ourselves on the verge of unfaithfulness, unaware till then of the way in which we had insidiously been led on by our subtle adversary.

Is it then to be questioned that in the momentous struggle about to take place Satan would employ his utmost talent to effect the fearful purpose he had in view? On the issue of this contest depended the continuance of his own authority over the hearts of men. It would terminate either in the permanence of his rule, or in his own eternal ruin and endless torment in the lake of fire.

It was to be a death struggle. No partial success was admissible on either side; the conflict must be carried on to the uttermost. On Satan's side power, influence, life itself was at stake. On the other hand, Jesus, the Son of God, having undertaken to do His Father's will, had to exhibit His thorough surrender to that will, let the consequences to Himself be what they might.

But in order that the fidelity of Jesus might be tested to the very utmost, there must be presented to Him, to His mind and heart, such temptations as would not be offered to an ordinary human being.

Anything calculated to affect Him must be superior to the low grovelling ideas by which we are led astray. It must be adapted to the dignity of His position as Son of God; to the holiness of His character; to the well-known obedience of His heart; to the exalted purposes for which He came into the world. It must be contrived with reference to what had been so long predicted about His being born to sit upon the throne of David (2 Sam. vii. 16; Luke i. 32); likewise to the misery and scorn He would have to pass through,

as described by the prophet Isaiah (chap. liii.); and also to the agony and ignominy of the cross, as the sin-bearer, foretold in Lev. iv. and Psalm xxii., &c., &c.

Further, it must be calculated to affect One who, being about to surrender life itself under these fearful circumstances, had to depend upon receiving it again as a gift from His Father (Psalm xvi. 10; xxi. 4), and to rely upon Him both for the putting down of His adversaries, as well as for the attainment and maintenance of His own future authority and supremacy. (Psalms cx. and xxi. 5.) Each of these points had the adversary to weigh, and to combine them all in his scheme for seducing from His allegiance the Holy One of God.

He had succeeded with all who had gone before, whether created innocent, as Adam and Eve; whether possessing great and precious promises, as Abraham and David; upright, as Noah, Job, and Daniel; or meek and faithful, as Moses. And it must be borne in mind that Satan can read Scripture and understand its bearing and force better than we can. His use of Psalm xci. evinces this.

He was now to employ all his long experience, all his skill, all the various deceptions and falsehoods of which he is master, all his power, urged on by his hatred to God and man, in this grand effort to avert his own ruin by establishing a flaw or blemish in the character and conduct of Jesus.

The nature of the contest had been long foreseen. Both this and the issue were clearly depicted in the book of God, where the conflict, the death, the resurrection, and the glory of Jesus had been related beforehand. Satan was now to do his utmost to test whether the actual obedience of the Holy One would in all respects equal what was there described, or whether it were not possible by the resources of his art to circumvent and beguile into unfaithfulness.

To us who know the marvellous results and the

character of the combatants, the issue could not be doubted; but at the time of these events the battle had not yet been fought, and Jesus had not proved Himself "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

THE FIRST TEMPTATION.

WE now come to the first of the series of trials of faith and faithfulness of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God.

Jesus had just been acknowledged by the voice of His Father as "His beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased." The Spirit of God had just descended upon Him. He returned from the Jordan full of the Holy Ghost. And by the Spirit He is led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

So familiar are we with the narrative from our early days, that we are in the habit of overlooking the nature of this event, perhaps regarding it as in no way remarkable. But marvellous beyond measure was the whole transaction. That God's Son should have been at all exposed to the assaults of Satan was in itself sufficiently astounding; but that He should for forty whole days and nights be left to his malice is beyond all wonder.

In the day time no friendly eye was there to comfort the lonely One; no voice to express admiration or sympathy. No hand was extended to help, no heart to feel for His sufferings, or to be edified by the fortitude with which He endured them. By night, instead of the palace, the retinue, the appointments becoming a king, the King of Israel, Jesus had no other resting-place than the bare soil of the desert, no other attendants than the wild beasts. The lion was there with its savageness and appalling roar; the wild boar with all its ferocity; the serpent with its deadly poison; all urged on by the great enemy to do their worst to harass and to terrify.

If sleep came upon Him, we may be sure it was not of long continuance. The enemy knows too well the effect of broken rest to allow slumber to be enjoyed. A fresh howl of the wolf, or yell of the hyena would be employed to startle the weary sufferer.

During this long and dreary period, in addition to all such miseries, there was the entire absence of food. "He did eat nothing!" None of the natural support by which men recruit their strength; no diet such as He was accustomed to was then allowed to Him. There were no stores of food and drink to which He could have recourse, no willing and loyal hands to supply the King with nutriment, no birds of the air to bring Him sustenance. The desert furnished nothing save stones.

The forty days of this treatment affected the frame of our blessed Lord. "He was afterwards an hungered."* The bodily exhaustion, and the apparent abandonment by God of His beloved Son, were but a prelude to the more direct attacks of the adversary.

History tells us of various nations in which the young warrior is made to undergo painful and severe trial of his courage and fortitude, ushered in by fasts, vigils, and solitude. It was thus that Jesus, the Lord of all, was made to pass through these preliminary distresses previous to the commencement of His earthly service, in order that His fidelity to His Father might be clearly developed, and the steadfastness of His faith in Him fully tried and proved by the severity of this fearful ordeal.

The tempter having thus far carried out his scheme, now makes his personal appearance. The narrative leads to the inference that it was in the guise of a

* Once again we read of His hunger, which He desired to appease by the unripe fruit of the fig tree, but there was none; and once of His being thirsty on the cross. Fatigue too is noticed in John iv. 6.

friend, probably as "an angel of light." After long isolation a friend is peculiarly welcome; and if he comes with words of commiseration, and of suggestion how present sorrow and trouble may be removed, we know how his value is enhanced.

Satan perceives the condition and circumstances in which Jesus was placed, and offers immediate relief.— "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread!" Nothing could be more opportune than such counsel, none more calculated to win its way to the heart.

Of the actual fact on which the advice was founded, Satan was well aware. Luke iv. 34-41 shows us that he knew Jesus of Nazareth to be the Christ, the Son of God, the Holy One of God; and fully admitting this, he now intimates that nothing can be so suitable as to relieve His immediate wants by the exercise of His divine power. He who created the world (John i. 3) and its inhabitants (Col. i. 16), and who upholds all things (Heb. i. 3), need not hesitate to supply Himself with what is so necessary, so indispensable as food. The merely changing a few of the stones lying around would presently be done, involving neither delay nor trouble. And since to all appearance no one cared for Him, it was evident He was to employ His own resources. Moreover it was the wilderness where no eye could see what He might think fit to do!

Jesus, full of the Holy Ghost, sees the nature of this advice, well knowing the character of him who gives it. The insidious subtlety of the enemy, though it might succeed with Eve, is detected and resisted by the Holy One of God.

Whereas Eve, surrounded with everything she could desire, and having no excuse for disobedience, could not refrain from one solitary article of diet; Jesus having tasted nothing for forty days, and having all power in His own hands, prefers to remain depending on His Father, as long as His Father sees fit to keep

Him without sustenance, and until His Father is pleased to bestow it upon Him!

And how does He meet the tempter? Is there any line of guidance for one circumstanced as He was? Any rule of action for the Son of God destitute of nourishment for forty days? Does He reason upon natural proprieties, necessities? Does He allege that He must keep Himself from starvation? that to change stone into bread would be doing no harm to anyone?

There is an old book, much talked about, but seldom examined; much honoured in sentiment, but in practice too often despised. A book of such ancient date that its enactments are considered *obsolete*. A book about certain statements in which Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes and lawyers can discuss and dispute; but which one and all agree is entirely inferior to their own opinions and traditions.

This book contained the orders of God for the guidance of His people Israel. Jesus, as a servant of the circumcision (Rom. xv. 8), feels that by the orders and principles issued by His God and Father it becomes Him to abide. Kings were to write a copy of this book (Deut. xvii. 18), in order that they of all others might be acquainted with the commands of the Most High, and Jesus, the King of Israel, speaks of Himself as meditating therein all the day. (Psalm cxix. 97.) To the injunctions issued therein He now in this emergency recurs, and with the promptitude which thorough acquaintance with them alone could confer.

How often are our poor hearts and minds led astray by the wiles of the adversary, judging, as we are in the habit of doing, that the light of reason, common sense, and rectitude of purpose will secure us from mistakes! It was not so with Jesus. With Him the sole and sufficient reply was, "It is written!"

The written and declared enactment of God was to Him the sole rule of life. Whatever the Father had been pleased to establish, His Son so fully accepts and

obeys, that though the fast may yet be prolonged indefinitely with all its distress, the Son still looks to Him for deliverance, and to Him alone. And though possessing all power even to transmute stones into bread, yet neither on this occasion nor on any other did He use that power to supply His own personal wants.

The piece of money that the fish was made to give up was no exception, for the Lord as a Son having first established His freedom from liability to be taxed for the maintenance of His Father's house, submits to the taxation to prevent the authorities being stumbled by His refusing. Amidst all the frivolous excuses which we are prone to use to escape conformity to the commands of our God, how brightly does the conduct of the Holy One shine out in contrast!

There is no reason to conclude that Satan limited his endeavour to one attempt. Indeed from the second and third temptations being told in a different order by Matthew and Luke, there is some reason to infer that they were more than once repeated. Yet on each attempt the unvarying answer was, "It is written."

Moreover each day and even each hour of the forty days' fast was a trial of the faith; as likewise each night passed in the wilderness. And Satan well knows the efficacy of reiterated temptations. Though we may resist once and again, yet by degrees the firmness of resistance relaxes till we at length too often succumb.

To be continued.

THE CHURCH OF THYATIRA.

PART I.

THE progress of evil is very rapid, and if sin of any kind be allowed or excused in an assembly of Christians, it quickly spreads, and in process of time will probably so permeate the whole body that it becomes well-nigh impossible to deal with it in a godly manner.

This is one secret of the decay of churches, which

were once a pattern of all holy conversation and godliness; and this has been one great cause of all the corruptions and evil, whether in life or doctrine, which have disgraced the professed people of God, and have brought dishonour and shame upon His holy and blessed name.

It is not enough to gather together as the redeemed of God to serve and worship Him, but when thus gathered we must be careful to maintain that holy wall of separation from evil which God has enjoined. If the wall be broken down, or breaches in it are unheeded and allowed to remain unrepaired, the result must be most disastrous. The enemy will creep in under various guises, and taking up his abode within the holy precincts of the Church will seduce God's servants from their allegiance unto Him, and breed and foster all kinds of disobedience.

Israel was commanded to remove the unclean outside the camp; and *now* the Lord's command to His people respecting such is this—"Put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

Holiness becomes His house for ever. Nothing that "defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie" will be permitted to enter into the holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem; and all such should be carefully excluded from the Church of God upon earth.

There is a "*within*" spoken of by God, even in this world of sin and wickedness; a sacred enclosure set apart by God, the care of which is in great measure committed to His people.

In boundless grace He has made Himself responsible for the eternal safety of every one of His redeemed. All such are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." They are the sheep of whom the Lord Jesus says—"I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." But while this is true of

every individual believer, the present outward manifestation of the Church as a body of holy worshippers depends upon the strict maintenance of God's prescribed rules as to godly discipline *within* the house.

We are not only saved through the precious blood of Christ, but are also "built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Christ Jesus." Christ is "a Son over His own house, whose house are we," and He has commanded us to "withdraw" ourselves "from every brother that walketh disorderly," and "to keep no company" with "any man that is called a brother," who is indulging in known sin.

"Do not ye judge them that are *within*, but them that are *without* God judgeth." And if professed Christians are not walking in obedience to the Lord's commands, we have most plain instructions that such should not be received into the visible Church, nor should they be recognized as Christians, either in social intercourse, or in the assemblies of God's people.

These injunctions may seem very hard, and it is always painful and difficult to carry them out, but they are the direct commands of our loving and gracious God, and any neglect of them brings confusion and trouble upon the Church of God, and consequent dishonour upon His holy name. "The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are," and nothing short of full obedience to these divine directions will preserve the holiness of God's house, or keep the mere professors of the truth from reckoning themselves, and also from being reckoned, as real children of God.

We read much in Ezra and Nehemiah of building and repairing the walls, and setting up the gates of the city; and surely, as we look around, we are obliged to confess that the wall which should separate Christians from the world is sadly broken down, and the porters fail to keep the gates, and thus the unclean enter in and defile the temple of the Lord.

It was the neglect of these commands which had brought such confusion into the Church of Thyatira. There were evidently very devoted Christians among them, of whom the Lord could testify—"I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first." This is very blessed commendation; indeed, nothing seems to be lacking. Faith and love, service and patience, all abounded, yea more, they increased; and yet this faithful and earnest band were unable to stay the strong current of evil which threatened to engulf the Church.

In Pergamos we read of those who *held* the doctrine of Balaam, but in Thyatira it was not only *held*, but *taught*. Yea more, it was taught under the garb of truth, so that the Lord says—"Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants."

How solemn is this! Disobedience to the Lord taught in His name and His servants seduced. Let us beware of this. How often do even real Christians say of some plain command of the Lord, 'We need not be so particular, He is very gracious:' thus making His exceeding grace an excuse for indulging in sin. Or, 'We need not be so strict;' or, 'I do not believe the Lord cares about such a little thing.'

Beloved fellow-Christians, is not this treading in the steps of Jezebel? and shall we dare to follow her, whether by example or precept, in seducing God's servants to walk contrary to Him? He cannot have fellowship with iniquity, and if we turn aside to worldliness or sin of any kind, we must lose the joy of His presence. The Lord Jesus "gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works."

It is remarkable that the same forms of evil characterized both Balaam and Jezebel—fornication, or spiritual adultery, and eating things sacrificed to idols,

or indulging in forbidden things. These are both the natural product of the human heart: the things to which God's people are prone to return if their love grows cold, or their faith becomes dim. How well we know its working in our own hearts, and how often we see its sad effects in those around!

How many a promising Christian turns aside to worldliness, and blights his whole life by seeking some earthly object, instead of fully following Christ! His eye has waxed dim; he has failed to use the spiritual eyesalve, and cannot see afar off, and therefore earthly gain or glory have regained their power.

How many also return to things which, in the first glow of love to Christ and consequent spiritual joy, they cast aside and cared not for! But love has waned, communion with God has been neglected, and the old cravings of the natural heart again resume the mastery. The unfed soul cries out for food, and Satan is ever ready to lead it back to what it once delighted in.

The bitter fruit of such conduct is strikingly shewn in the Lord's further appeal to this church, which we may hope to consider at some future time. Meanwhile may He in His mercy keep us so near Himself that we may continually be gladdened with the light of His countenance, and thus may be kept from desiring anything which He forbids.

THE GRACE OF GOD A LIFE DISCIPLINE.

PART II.

WE have been contemplating the grace of God as that which trains the believer into living in this present world as becomes one whom the God of grace has placed in the position of a child.

We noticed that in order to live according to the mind of God, there must be a denying of ungodliness and worldly desires. This presupposes ungodliness and worldliness as the natural characteristics of the un-

renewed heart, which is ever acting without reference to God on the one hand, and with reference to the world on the other.

To correct this the grace of God comes in as a discipline; but we are not placed under its guiding and training influence alone. Another influence is brought to bear upon us—the influence of “*hope*.”

Thus we who have been made partakers of grace, and of all its blessed teaching and moulding power, are called to look out for the blessed hope of the appearing of the glory. He who holds us now in the arms of His grace points us to the glory that is to be revealed at the appearing of our Lord and Master; and He who has called us in grace will give us glory likewise; as it is written, “Whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” We are therefore to live, “looking for that blessed hope, even the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

This hope is given to counteract the two tendencies which we are called to deny, and to make our denial of them easy; and the burden will be light, and the yoke easy, if taken up in the spirit of the Master who could say, “Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

God knows the power of hope to lighten conflict, and to make the denial of self easy. The devil also knows the power of hope in the heart of man, and therefore he has sought by all means to dim the “blessed hope,” to darken its brightness, and to throw doubt upon its nearness.

“*Maranatha*”—“the Lord is coming,” was the watchword of the ancient church in its weal or woe—a watchword of infinite consolation to the tried and afflicted, and of solemn warning to those who love not our Lord Jesus Christ, on whom the apostle pronounces that solemn “*anathema*.” The full meaning of that “*anathema*” will be made plain at the time of the

“maranatha,” when sinners will call on the mountains to fall upon them, and the hills to cover them from the presence of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. “Maranatha” tells its tale of woe in Rev. vi., and reveals its song of triumph and of praise in Rev. vii.

The “*coming*” speaks to the faithful servant in the daily walk of obedience, and in the path of suffering, and says, in the words of the Master to Peter, “If *I* will;” “Till *I* come.”

His is the right to will and to appoint for us. We dare not take these things into our own hands. *He* has uttered His “*I* will,” and will have us to understand that He who loved us, and gave Himself for us, claims the right to will for us, to dictate to us, to order the events and circumstances of our personal life as shall be most for His glory and for our good; and those are ever identical; for *we* are in partnership with Him, and therefore His glory is our good; and *He* is in partnership with us, and therefore our good is His glory. He can have no separate interest from us, and in proportion as we are true men we shall have nothing separate from Him.

Who can tell the joy of that word to the blessed Jesus, “Till *I* come”? It points to “the day of His espousals—the day of the gladness of His heart”—the day for which He groaned and bled on Calvary—the day to which His last lingering accents pointed when He sent the message to His church ending with these thrice-repeated words, “*I come quickly.*” Jesus is looking forward to that day; the Father is looking forward to that day; and the church is represented as looking forward to that day.

To faith the glory is present; for we all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord are transformed into the same image; for we have beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten, full of grace and truth.

By faith we behold *Him*; for "we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour." But that which to faith is *present*, to hope is *future*; and therefore we are expecting "the forthshining of the glory." It is now a hidden glory, and, like the "hidden wisdom," is revealed only by the Spirit, and apprehended only in the spirit by those who are spiritual.

But the hidden is to be manifested; and that which is now working as a mystery—inwardly, secretly—will become a revelation; and those who now *are* sons are awaiting the time when they shall be *manifestly* what they already are *really*.

The reality now is the opposite of the present appearance, through the delusion and confusion that Satan has brought into the world; but, in spite of all these apparent contradictions, and all Satan's lies, faith learns out and rejoices the more in the truth of God. Thus while faith sees its realities in the light of God, hope looks forward and waits patiently the unfolding of the purposes of God.

There must be no impatience; no impatient yearning for home must escape the servant's lips; no thought must be allowed in the heart that the Father delayeth the fulfilment of His promise. His waiting is in long-suffering grace; and we must wait in long-suffering love too, remembering that, had the promise been fulfilled a few years ago, we ourselves might never have been prepared to welcome its fulfilment; for what is the coming of the kingdom to those who have not already the kingdom *set up* in them but the coming of judgment sure and certain?

Hope is a very patient grace. It knows how to abide God's time; for we are told that, "if we hope for that we see not, then do we *with patience wait* for it;" and if impatience take the place of patient waiting, then certainly hope has failed, and its brightness has faded from the heart.

In order to counteract the impatience of our hearts

under faith's trials and the discipline of grace, hope—called here *the blessed hope*—is given to us, that in its blessedness our souls, “rejoicing in hope,” might learn to be “patient in tribulation.” Faith could not maintain its hold on the heart but in hope; and therefore we read, “Now abideth faith, hope, love.”

Hence while we can call things that are not as though they were, and enjoy blessings in promise as blessings possessed, we remember we are called unto a “salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.” Thus the salvation of the believer, though now secured to him, is a salvation that will not be fully manifested till *He* appear; and the “blessed hope” is the appearing of the glory. Then shall we learn the meaning of that word—“The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.” It is not so much a revelation *to* as a revelation *in* us; it affects not our condition outwardly only, but ourselves inwardly.

Hence the hope is so very blessed, because “when we see Him we shall be like Him;” and that which we now possess by faith we shall then possess *in fact*. We shall then realize absolute harmony of being, the want of which leads the heaven-aspiring soul, in its holiest moments of communion, to cry out, “O wretched man that I am!” The body, kept under with many a deadly thrust, is the body of death still, and will continue to be so till mortality be swallowed up of life.

The grace then that trains the believer how to live teaches him also what to hope for, and whom to look for—even *Him* “who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Let us not forget that it is “*unto Himself*” that we are to be brought, even as it is promised in John xiv.: “I will come again, and receive you *unto myself*; that where I am, there ye may be also.” We may well ponder over this truth, and see to it that we are not

frustrating in any way the blessed purposes of Him who loved us, who would have us "a people peculiarly His own," in a sense higher and holier than that in which any other creature is His.

All is His, in heaven above and in earth beneath; but *we* have been redeemed to fill a peculiar place, and therefore it is no wonder if our discipline and training be altogether peculiar and unlike that in kind and degree to which others will be subjected.

When Esau got a blessing he went to mount Seir, which God gave unto him; and there were kings in Edom before there were kings in Israel. Jacob, however, has to go down into Egypt, and there to be afflicted four hundred years; and so must it ever be with the seed of promise, for with them all is special.

As the training is peculiar, God expects peculiar sanctity and peculiar zeal. Holiness and good works are to characterize them, that they may be like unto Him who calls Himself their Father, and whose characteristics of love and pity they are to imitate, and thereby to become *manifestly* the children of their Father who is in heaven. It is to this end that all this training is being directed, and our wisdom is to seek fellowship with Him in all His ways, and say, "Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight."

We will conclude with God's gracious words to Israel, when He brought them out of Egypt—words which have an infinitely deeper significance in reference to those whom the precious blood of Christ has redeemed from a darker Egypt and a deeper perdition.

"Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you UNTO MYSELF. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure *unto me* above all people; for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be *unto me* a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." (Exodus xix. 4-6.)

THE FIVE THOUSAND FED.

JOHN vi. 5-12.

WE learn here the necessity of a knowledge of Jesus in His divine nature in order to have faith in Him.

To have faith in any individual we must be well acquainted with his character, tastes, feelings, hopes, and sympathies, that we may be able to discover if they are worthy of our trust and confidence. So in the spiritual life, we must know Jesus as our God and Saviour, mighty to save and strong to deliver, before we can yield Him perfect faith and reliance.

Philip, on more than one occasion, appears to have been ignorant of Jesus as the Son of God, or, possessing that knowledge, he was devoid of *that trust* which is the manifestation of true faith. Had he been fully acquainted with the divine attributes shining forth in the person of Jesus, he would not have answered the question, "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" with his own ideas of the bread and fishes. Rather would his thought have been, 'Lord, Thou canst do all things; Thou who didst turn water into wine, cast out devils, and raise the dead to life again; Thou canst feed these.' Faith would have answered thus.

How weak *our* faith is! how obtuse our understandings! how earthly our minds and hearts! Christian reader, do you not feel this? You know that Philip is but a type of ourselves. Have you not often thought, after some merciful interposition of the Lord's hand in your behalf, that you could trust Him for the future—that the remembrance of His past lovingkindness would make you calm and strong when the next cloud should darken your path, or the next sorrow overwhelm you? When it came, did you stand strong? Where was your faith?

Again we learn from this miracle, that though on "a mountain," or, as we are told in the other gospels,

in "a desert place," yet Jesus can feed His people with "honey from the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock." Though we may be in the desert or the forest, where no ministry of reconciliation proclaims "the unsearchable riches of Christ," He can *even there* bring home the precious promises of His word by the sealing power of the Holy Ghost; and the entrance of that word will give light and comfort to the sad and gloomy spirit; for "man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

The *place* where this bread was given teaches us that the covenant of grace, the fulness that is in Christ, is not for heaven, but for earth; not for the church triumphant, but for the church militant.

As the Israelites were to gather the manna daily, so we need to go to Jesus daily for fresh supplies of grace and strength, that we may be "strengthened with all might in the inner man," and go forth as giants to run the race, conquering and to conquer.

Christ by His example teaches us the need and duty of asking God's blessing upon our food, as well as upon the greater and more important acts of our lives, that we may follow the apostolic injunction, "In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

From the fact of His giving the bread to the disciples, He teaches us that He employs means for the accomplishment of His purposes. He could have fed the multitude Himself, but He allowed the disciples to distribute to them that were set down. So it is now; His disciples have the privilege of scattering abroad the seeds of divine truth, always remembering that they must first receive them from the hands of Jesus.

The provisions of the gospel appear to the carnal eye mean and scanty; yet they suffice for the multitudes who feed on Him by faith; and His ministers may go forth to dispense the bread of life, assured that it will increase in their hands, and supply the wants of all

who hunger, and that while they feed others they will also enrich themselves; for "he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

THE CHURCH OF THYATIRA.

REVELATION ii. 18-29.

PART II.

WE have already considered the *state* of the church of Thyatira, and let us now look at the sorrowful results of the evil which was permitted among them, and also consider the exceeding grace and wisdom with which the Lord deals with them.

The Lord Jesus presents Himself to this church as "The Son of God." They needed to be reminded of the dignity of His person, to see Him as the Lord of heaven and earth, the One whose word was law, and who had power to enforce His commands.

"Who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire," discerning every secret thing, understanding every word and act, yea, searching the reins and hearts. Nothing could escape His piercing gaze. No intent or motive could be veiled from Him. They might deceive each other, but could not impose upon Him. He thus seeks to draw them back unto Himself, and to lead them to walk before Him in truthfulness and uprightness of heart.

"And His feet are like fine brass," strong and mighty to deal in judgment, able to crush His enemies, and trample all evil beneath His feet. He had power to interfere in judgment, but would far rather deal in grace; and therefore He had patiently endured their evil ways, and had waited with much long-suffering to see if they would repent.

"I gave her space to repent." How striking are these words! How characteristic of our blessed Lord! How often He deals thus with His wayward people. Verily, He delights in mercy, is slow to anger, and

ready to forgive. He is indeed the very One just suited to our need; so pitiful, so full of compassion, so rich in mercy, so ready to distribute to the poor and needy; yea, giving liberally and upbraiding not.

Still He will not, cannot pass by sin, and though He gives space to repent, yet if His long-suffering mercy be despised, He will surely cause His displeasure to be known and felt. Very sad and solemn are those words, "and she repented not," and very terrible are their consequences.

"Behold I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation." The Lord Himself would lay His hand upon *her*—upon Jezebel—the carnal teacher who was seducing the church; but not on her only, but also upon those who committed adultery with her—God's own people who had turned aside to sin. *Great* tribulation was to come upon them, "except," as is so graciously added, "they repent of their deeds."

So it will always be; tribulation, yea, great tribulation will come upon the careless, disobedient Christian. The Lord may tarry long to see if such will repent, but if not, His word is pledged. "Then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes." "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God." Yet even this judgment is in mercy; for "when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

This tribulation is very distinct from the trial of faith, which is spoken of as precious even to God, or persecution for the sake of Christ, concerning which we are told to rejoice and leap for joy, or other troubles which may come upon the Christian in the path of obedience, and which we are exhorted to count as all joy, because "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Such trials may be very sharp and very bitter, but still amid them all our Father's love sustains, His everlasting arms are underneath the sufferer, His cheering voice is heard, His gracious smile is felt, and songs of thankfulness and praise are mingled with the tears which will not be restrained.

But tribulation from the hand of God—His rod stretched forth to smite His wilful wayward son—ah, this is bitterness indeed! No songs are mingled with this grief; no cheering smile revives the soul; it sits alone and eats the bread of tears; it knows full well the secret of its woe. Friends may rise up and try to comfort, but in vain. There is a gaping wound within; a bitter, bitter sense of guilt; a consciousness of long continued sin which has provoked the Lord; a deep unrest, which nought can still, until the wanderer returns, and weeps out all his tale of sin and woe before the Lord.

Blessedly true it is that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin;" and in Him "we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." But this is no license for sin, nor will God suffer His people to go on in sin, without dealing with them for it.

Indeed this is part of the covenant which He has made with us. Not only has He said, "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more;" but also, "I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;" and as surely as we are brought into the covenant, and made partakers of the blessings purchased by the blood of Christ, so surely do we come under the tender holy discipline of our Father's hand, who will not suffer us to walk in our own sinful ways, or carry out the devices of our own evil hearts.

"If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons;" for "whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."

Still, in the midst of judgment He remembers mercy ; He knows the desperate wickedness of our evil hearts, and has made such full provision for it, that in spite of our continued failure, if we will only humble ourselves before Him, we may be so restored as to be happy and at ease in His holy presence. He has told us that "if we will judge ourselves, we shall not be judged;" and "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," and far from dealing with us in judgment because of them, He Himself will undertake for us, and help us in our conflict against them.

May we thus learn to use Him as our refuge and strength, our helper and deliverer ; and so walk before Him in humility of mind, that we may enjoy His presence, and prove His sustaining, quickening power.

"And I will kill her children with death." *Her children ; bastard children ; imitation Christians. Probably persons who had deceived themselves. Persons in whom the worldliness and carnal walk of Christians had brought forth its natural fruit, by leading them to consider themselves converted when they were not. The standard of holy separation unto God had been so lowered among them, that the natural man could reach it, and thus these bastard children had not only deceived themselves, but had also been publicly recognized as Christians.*

Very solemn is the judgment pronounced upon them. Though thus banded together with the people of God, the Lord Himself would "kill them with death." His "fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor," and "gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity." Such persons are as "the grass upon the housetop, which withereth afore it groweth up," and unless they discover their mistake, and really fly to Christ for refuge, they must be "cast into the lake of fire."

Beloved fellow Christians, let us lay these things to heart. It is a solemn thing to be used by the devil to

beget or foster these bastard children. It is a terrible thing to help him in deceiving souls, and as surely as we turn aside from the holy commandments of the Lord our God, we shall encourage some poor slaves of sin to think they may serve both God and mammon, and hold with the devil, and yet belong to Christ.

“And all the churches shall know that I am He that searcheth the reins and hearts.” He cannot be deceived; and the day will come when He “will make manifest the counsels of the hearts,” and remove every veil of deceit, and every cloke of covetousness. Let us walk in the light of that day, and remember that “there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known.”

We read of one who prayed, “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.” And such will be our prayer when our hearts are right with Him. His power is *for* us, and not *against* us, and we can rejoice in His perfect knowledge of our case, because we can say, “Will He plead against me with His great power? No; but He will put strength in me.”

“And I will give unto every one of you, according to your works”—*you*, the Lord’s own redeemed ones, as contrasted with those before spoken of.

“Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.” This is God’s immutable, irrevocable law. His decree is sure, “Them that honour me, I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” “Whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord;” “but he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done, and there is no respect of persons.”

“God is not mocked;” and though “His compassions fail not,” yet He will not suffer His people to sin with impunity. Still less will He suffer a single act of obedience or faithfulness to Him to pass unre-

quited. He knows the pressure of evil around us. He knows what it costs us to resist temptation, and great and marvellous are the rewards both present and future which He bestows. Blessed, doubly blessed, are they who fear to sin against Him, and delight greatly in His commandments.

“But unto you, I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine”—*you*, faithful ones, of whom He had before testified—“I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first:” *you*, who far from holding these antinomian doctrines, have done all you can to resist them: *you*, “which have not known the depths of Satan,” who did not discern his cunning craft, and were too slow in your efforts to repel him, “I will put upon you none other burden.”

The tender compassion of their Lord flows forth to comfort them. He sees them mourning over the bitter fruits of permitted evil; their hearts sad and sore because of confusion in the church, and far from rebuking them for their want of foresight, He seeks to encourage and strengthen them.

The burden was upon them; they felt its weight, and needed a word of cheer. Satan had succeeded in introducing traitors within the camp, and their influence was very sad. They had no heart for Christ, and were always ready to encourage any cold-hearted Christians, to turn aside and make light of sin.

Thus the burden was a double one; for these true-hearted ones not only groaned beneath the weight of these spurious Christians, but were also oppressed and grieved with the worldliness, carnal security and self-indulgence which characterized so many of the real believers, and which made it well nigh impossible to discern between the true and the false.

How blessed then this word of sympathy—“I will put upon you none other burden.” How suited to

revive their faith and courage, and imbue them with strength to pursue their way. How it unveils *His* heart of love, and speaks of His tender pity. Verily He is One who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and knows how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.

And then He adds so graciously—"But that which ye have already hold fast till I come." He puts the hope of His coming before them. He saw their strength was well nigh spent, and seems to say, "Only a little while, and I will come, and then your conflicts will be over."

Such is "the blessed hope" which He sets before us. He knows its reviving power. He knows what spring and energy it gives to the slow and weary step. He would have us expecting HIM: our affections fixed upon *Himself*, longing to hail His advent, and waiting patiently for that morning without clouds when *He* will come, and all our hopes will be fulfilled.

He would have it a *near* and a *present* hope; giving vigour to our souls, and firmness to our steps, and enabling us to count our present trials as but a passing cloud, which soon will vanish away.

"Hold fast;" and again, "He that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end." He seems to say—

"Shrink not, Christian; wilt thou yield?
Wilt thou quit the battle field?
Shrink not ere the fight be done,
Ere the prize be won."

It is no easy matter to "hold fast." We may run well for a time, but the journey is so great, that by degrees our footsteps flag; our weary hearts relax their hold, and then our ever watchful foe puts forth his hand and seeks to rob us of our precious things. We need this cheering word, "hold fast;" and He who speaks the word is ever ready with the needed strength, and hears the feeblest cry for help.

Then come the promises to him that overcometh. (Verses 26-28.) Such may be despised in this world of sin, but they shall reign with Jesus up above. They may feel their weakness here, but they shall rule in power, with their beloved Lord, in all the glory of His kingdom.

But sweeter far than this, more cheering to the heart, more precious to the soul, He adds, "And I will give him the morning star." The more than midnight gloom shall be succeeded by the morning star. The blessed Lord Himself will come. He notes the longing of each heart for Him. He counts each weary sigh, and great and full shall be the recompence of every one who waits, and longs, and prays to hear His shout, as He descends to take us to Himself.

"I KNOW THEIR SORROWS."

Exodus iii. 9.

THESE words were addressed to Moses when the Lord called him from the burning bush to go and lead His people out of Egyptian bondage. "They cried," and "God heard their groaning," and "remembered His covenant." He knew their sorrows, and though at first He did not *appear* to hear their cry, in His own good time He sent them a deliverer.

May not we also draw comfort from these words? Suffering child of God, your Father knows your sorrows; and though you may think He hides His face for a season, the sun is but "behind the cloud," and thy Jesus is still the same: He changeth not.

The disciples "feared as they entered into the cloud," and so often do we. We fear and tremble at the thought of suffering for Christ; but what else are we to expect? "In the world ye shall have tribulation." And shall we tremble at a little suffering for Him who gave His life for us? *No*; rather let us "*rejoice* that we are counted worthy to suffer for His

name.” “Unto you it is given to suffer for His name.” (Phil. i. 25.)

“Given!” By whom? By *our Father*. And “the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” Am I to escape the cross and gain the crown? The Lord Jesus Himself was made perfect through suffering; and shall His servants escape it? Has He not told us that the servant is not greater than his lord?

We are at school here; this is not our home. Our Father is training us by these very trials for our place in heaven. He sits watching over us like the refiner. “When He has tried me,” says Job, “I shall come forth as gold.” “Thou hast tried us as silver is tried.” “I have refined thee,” our Lord says, “but not for silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.”

Suffering saint, is your heart ready to sink within you? Do you ask, Why am I called upon to pass through such deep waters? “Whom the Lord *loveth* He chasteneth.” He *knows* your sorrows. “He doth not afflict *from the heart*, or grieve the children of men.” “His compassions fail not.” He is touched with the feeling of your infirmities. Oh, what a tender heart our Jesus has!

It is for your *good* He afflicts you. Though your faith be tried as with fire, it is to make you *perfect*—stablish, strengthen, settle you. You cannot now read the meaning of these trials; but be satisfied to take them on trust for a little while. “What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.” Trust then, and be not afraid. Your Father will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able. He will hold your right hand, saying, “Fear not, I will help thee.”

Are you mourning for the loss of some loved one that has been called to go up higher? Jesus knows your sorrows. He has taken your dear one to Himself. Oh, weep not for the one who is safely landed on that “blessed shore, where the ransomed weep no more.”

The loss is hard to bear, and flesh and heart seem ready to sink under the blow; but the Lord will enable you, even in the depths of your grief, to say, "Thy will be done."

Your dear one has but "gone before." "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh." In a few short years at the *longest* you will be re-united in that blessed home, and be for ever with the Lord. "Wherefore comfort one another *with these words.*"

Since thy Father's arm sustains thee,
Peaceful be;
When a chastening hand restrains thee,
It is He.
Know His love, in full completeness,
Fills the measure of thy weakness.
If He wound thy spirit sore,
Trust Him more.

Without murmur, uncomplaining,
In His hand
Lay whatever things thou canst not
Understand;
Though the world thy folly spurneth,
From thy faith in pity turneth,
Peace thy inmost soul shall fill,
Lying still.

Like an infant, if thou thinkest
Thou canst stand,
Childlike, proudly pushing back
The offered hand,
Courage soon is changed to fear,
Faith doth feebleness appear;
In His love, if thou abide,
He will guide.

Fearlest sometimes that thy Father
Hath forgot?
When the clouds around thee gather,
Doubt Him not;
Always hath the daylight broken,
Always hath He comfort spoken:
Better hath He been for years
Than thy fears.

Therefore, whatsoe'er betideth,
 Night or day,
 Know His love for thee provideth
 Good always.
 Crown of sorrow gladly take,
 Patient wear it for His sake,
 Sweetly bending to His will,
 Lying still.

“NEVER LONELY.”

“LONELY and weary? No, I am never lonely; Jesus is always with me, and He makes me so happy that I seldom feel weary.”

Such was the reply of a poor afflicted Christian, on being asked if she were not often very lonely and very weary.

“I know but little truth,” she added, “I cannot search into the deep things of God, but *Jesus* is with me, JESUS HIMSELF. HE talks to me, HE feeds me *Himself*, a few words at a time as I am able to bear it, and He makes me so peaceful, so happy.”

On being asked if it had been always thus with her, she replied, “Oh, no; I was very fretful when first laid on this bed; I was His child *then*, but I had not learnt to make Jesus my Friend and Companion; I tried to bear the pain myself, and used to get so lonely and wretched; but now I have Himself, *Himself!* *His* company, *His* presence.

Dear fellow-Christians, is there not a word for us here? Have we thus learnt to delight in Jesus *Himself*? Are we not very prone to neglect personal intercourse with Him? And is not this oftentimes one of the Lord's chief objects in laying His children by?

He desires to draw us *nearer* to Himself; to teach us to delight in *Himself* personally. Not so much in what He *has*, as in what He *is*. Not so much in the riches of grace and glory which He has bestowed upon us, as in His *own* deep and personal love to us.

Seasons of great weakness and suffering are seldom seasons of much prayer or exercise of soul, but they are seasons in which we may blessedly prove the sustaining, cheering, soothing power of the love and smile of Jesus. There may be no power to read, or pray, or think; no energy for self-examination, or self-judgment, or humiliation before the Lord. This may not be *His* object in the affliction, and therefore we are incapable of such exertion, and languor and weariness oppress both mind and body, and long and weary hours roll by.

And why these hours of suffering? They *seem* but wasted time; and yet we know our Father's hand will never cause one needless tear. They *seem* so profitless. Our wonted service is neglected; our purposed schemes all come to nought; while our own souls, far from being sown or weeded, are left untended and uncared for.

But is it wasted time? Ah, no. 'Tis thus we learn our utter emptiness: our natural powers are all dried up, and worn and weary of ourselves, our very wretchedness obliges us to seek a rest in Christ Himself. 'Tis thus our Father seeks to teach us what the blessed Jesus is, and how He can sustain and cheer His weary ones.

What suffering child of God has not experienced the mighty power of His sustaining arms in times of special weakness? How heavily the time drags on, unless we have His manifested presence. But let His presence be enjoyed, His smile be felt, and quiet rests the soul.

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

He loves to see us nestling beneath His feathers, covered with His own Almighty warm and loving wing, satisfied with His presence, content to be soothed, and comforted and loved, nourished and cherished by Him.

It is thus we learn the exceeding tenderness of our Beloved, and prove for ourselves that if *He* is with us, cheering us with His love, even a bed of weakness and weariness may be a place of peace and joy.

May *we* thus learn to cleave to Jesus, not only on the couch of suffering, but amid the daily bustle and turmoil of life. We forget those precious words, “*Without me ye can do nothing,*” and therefore try to bear the burden or do the work ourselves, instead of making HIM our Friend, our Helper, our Companion.

We have no strength in ourselves. We cannot bring forth fruit alone. The Lord knows our weakness; He tells us of it, and entreats us to *abide* in Him, that His strength may be perfected in us. The flesh may be very active doing this or that, but fellowship, close personal fellowship with Christ *alone* can really make us fruitful in His ways. He knows our need, and in His rich and precious grace, He not only presents Himself to us as our Saviour, our Redeemer, but also offers to be our Guide, our Guard, our Strength.

Such is His wonderful love, that He delights to hear our voice, and loves to see our face. Such is His tender pity, that instead of being wearied and vexed with our folly and weakness, He is always ready and willing to give us a helping hand in all He bids us do. He knows our poverty and emptiness, and far from gathering where He has not strawed, or demanding from us what we have no strength to do, He is always waiting with bounteous open hand to give us full supplies.

“Our never failing treasury, filled
With boundless stores of grace.”

He does not *drive* His timid sheep, but gently *leads* them forth, and when we suffer *Him* to lead, we neither thirst nor faint. “They thirsted not when *He* led them through the deserts.”

Poor foolish ones indeed we are, and often walk *alone*, and that is why our steps are weak and faltering. Ah, had we learnt to be the helpless little ones, fearing to take one step alone, what victors we should be! Each trial then would only bring forth fruit in us. The flesh would be subdued, and Satan bruised beneath our

feet. Our service would be ordered by Himself, and we should have the needed word from Him for those we come in contact with; while prayer and praise would be the natural outflow of our glad and happy hearts.

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST.

THE SECOND TEMPTATION.

THE scene of the second temptation, as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, is no longer in the wilderness. The devil is now permitted to bring the Lord Jesus to Jerusalem, the holy city; and when there to convey Him to the Temple, and place Him on the very summit—the highest point—the *pinnacle*.*

It will at once occur to the mind, Why did Satan conduct the Lord thither, and wherein consisted the temptation to throw Himself down? If it were merely to produce such physical excitement as men sometimes experience when standing on the edge of a precipice, or on the brink of a well, any rock in the wilderness would have answered the purpose. If the attempt was to overcome the instinct of self-preservation by reckless exposure to destruction, there does not appear any sufficient moral principle aroused, nor any temptation befitting the character and position of the One tempted or the skill of the tempter.

The explanation lies deeper. All the previous efforts

* In the description of Solomon's temple the height of the structure over the porch is given at 120 cubits, equal to 180 feet; and Josephus, book viii. chap. 3, speaks of the same altitude in the temple built by Herod, which existed in the day when our Lord was on the earth. No account is anywhere given of the shape of this tower; but if there be any idea capable of being drawn from Eastern temples, whose general structure is somewhat similar to what is described in 1 Kings vi., it may have been pyramidal, not converging to a point as in the modern steeple, but receding by degrees, and terminating in a horizontal line. The "corner-stone," or "top-stone," would thus be the stone completing the edifice. On such an apex there would be room to stand.

had been made in the loneliness of the wilderness, out of the sight of man. This, on the contrary, is in full publicity. The city full of inhabitants—the Temple thronged with worshippers—the priests carrying on the ceremonial observances—all were on the spot to witness what might occur. The Temple, standing high above the valley of Jehoshaphat (where the building called the Dome of the Rock, or the Mosque of Omar, now stands), would be the conspicuous object to all the city; and the tower above it, rising high beyond, would be the point of attention to the whole country around. A human figure standing on its apex against the sky could not but attract universal notice, and become the gaze and wonder of all within view.

If then this individual, instead of shrinking from danger, were boldly and fearlessly to step forward, not with headlong rashness, but with dignity and uprightness of carriage, how astonished would the spectators be!

But how much greater their astonishment and wonder, if they beheld a circle of angels surrounding, sustaining, and reverentially bearing away Him who had thus precipitated Himself into the air!

Such would beyond doubt have been the spectacle, had Jesus yielded to the voice of the tempter. The promise was distinct and explicit: "He shall give His angels charge over Thee, and in their hands shall they bear Thee up, lest Thou dash thy foot against a stone." The angels were on the spot, but their services were not called into exercise.

Again it will be asked, But wherein consisted the temptation to commit Himself to their care?

The multitude of observers below—all Jews, and all more or less conversant with their own Scriptures—were all in expectation of the coming of their Messiah. He had long been looked for. In the early chapters of Matthew and Luke we learn the state of feeling among high and low at the time of the birth of Jesus. From the shepherd in the field to Herod on the throne, all

were in expectation. Scribe and Pharisee point to the very prophecies indicating that their King was to be born at Bethlehem. It was He who was "to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the outcasts of Israel." Ardently did they long for the promised deliverance, especially from the Roman yoke, and for Him who was to accomplish all this.

The 91st Psalm so clearly speaking of the Messiah, and of His being borne up by angels corroborated by the fact of Jesus being so sustained, as their own eyes would testify, would at once establish Him beyond all doubt as the expected One—induce them to receive and accept Him as their Monarch, the One so sent and attested by the Father. Satan appeals to the passage as pertaining to Him, and the Lord does not deny it.

There still remains the question, What would be the inducement to Jesus so to cast Himself down? To one like ourselves it would indeed be no temptation at all, even with all possible grandeur in prospect; but it was otherwise to Him. Satan, who could read aright Psalm xci., could read also other psalms: the 22nd for instance. In these the sorrows unto death that awaited the Holy One of God, His rejection, the mockery, hatred, agony, crucifixion, are all described, and were well known to Satan, as also to the Son of God. The suggestion conveyed by the tempter is—'All these sufferings are needless, and will all be avoided when thy people see Thee borne up by the angels, thus proving thyself to be the Messiah!' Here was indeed a temptation! At once to escape all the fearful miseries which earth could heap upon His blessed head, and at once to commence His reign of happiness and glory, welcomed by the willing hearts of those He so tenderly loved.

From all the accumulation of misery, both already undergone and awaiting Him afterwards, there was the presentation of immediate escape. And this through a further exercise of the very faith He had

already exhibited! 'Thou hast faith enough to endure; hast thou faith enough to grasp the promise, and to cast thyself down? If Thou dost not do this, it will be thy want of faith that prevents Thee from at once ascending the throne.'

Keen must have been this trial, great the torture inflicted. Far from being impervious to the pain, His exquisite sensibility shows itself in such words as "Reproach hath broken my heart," "As with a sword in my bones mine enemies reproach me," "My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?"

Marvellous was the self-possession and fortitude with which the adversary was foiled. Transported hither and thither at the will of His enemy, the beloved Son of God ever bears about with Him the recollection of His Father's love and the orders issued for the guidance of His people. The same book contains a command applicable to the present occasion—Again "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Had it been possible for Jesus to fall accidentally from that dizzy height, the angels were there to sustain Him; but were He to cast Himself down, it would be voluntarily to put Himself in a position of danger without any order for so doing, for the attainment of an object which He well knew His Father had arranged to be brought about in another way and at another period.

The loving Son will neither evade the prescribed process, nor expedite the time by any action of His own. To do so would be to tempt the Lord His God. As a servant it was His part to obey, not to arrange or prescribe. To act otherwise would be to legislate, to interfere with and set aside His Father's plans. This may not be. It would be incompatible with the engagement, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O my God."

Israel did not thus restrain themselves. Numbers xiv. 22 mentions their having ten times tempted God, and Psalm lxxviii. gives other instances.

THE THIRD TEMPTATION.

The scene of the third temptation is "an exceeding high mountain"—perhaps Hermon or Ararat. From thence Satan presents the view of all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

Rome with her wide-spread dominion would probably be foremost in the picture—her population, wealth, armies, civilization, cities, palaces, with all that comprises grandeur and magnificence. Egypt too, with all that remained of her former splendour. The kingdoms of Asia would pass in review, with everything they contained that was attractive. And the land of Israel would not be forgotten—Emmanuel's own land—the favoured country on which the eyes of God rested continually (Deut. xi. 12), with all its past associations and all its future glory. All these, and whatever was attractive in other regions, would be presented successively.

This vast spectacle was not then beheld for the first time by the Son of God. As the Creator-God, He was familiar with the sight. Those regions were the work of His own hands, and upheld by His power and wisdom. The very earth itself owns Him as its Maker. Yet, as Son of man, Jesus may not hitherto have seen them.

The extensive knowledge, skill, and power possessed by Satan in making this display are not to be overlooked. It was a time when the prince of darkness was allowed to show what he was capable of doing.

But for what purpose was this exhibition made? Satan, "the prince of this world" (John xiv. 30); "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. ii. 2); "the god of this world" (2 Cor. iv. 4), claims and exercises dominion over all. The usurper is for a season allowed to do this. Our first parents fell under his influence by yielding to him, and sinning against God;

and, with all their posterity, became enslaved by him. His power, however, is limited; and his title itself was annulled when Jesus expired on the cross.

This power he has long exercised, and still employs. Hereafter there will be a far greater display of it, both in heaven, as foretold in Rev. xii., and on earth, in Rev. xiii. At the time of these temptations, his ability was sufficiently indicated by the transport of the Lord Jesus from the desert to the pinnacle of the temple, and from thence to the summit of the exceeding high mountain; and also by causing to pass before Him all the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them.

All this power and glory he now offers to relinquish and bestow on Jesus on one single condition—"if thou wilt fall down and worship me." It was a stipulation that involved no arduous labour. Nor would it occupy any lengthened period in the performance. A single instant would suffice. Moreover, great care had been taken to make it easy. It was not to be done in a crowded city, or before a multitude of witnesses; nor was it to be attended with any public solemnity. It was to be done then and there—on the top of the mountain, beyond the range of human vision, in the lonely spot where they were standing.

Such was the proposal. And in this shape the temptation was laid by which our Lord was not only to escape all the deep sorrow that lay before Him, with its attendant horrors, but also at once to ascend the throne of Israel; and not the throne of Israel only, but at once to attain the sovereignty wherever Satan had hitherto borne rule.

Failing to accept this offer, there was the Cross unavoidably before Him; and after rising from the dead, far from immediately obtaining the dear objects of His desire, there was the long, long delay, more than eighteen hundred years before coming into possession.

There was likewise the lengthened vista of His people's miseries, all to be escaped by the acceptance

of the offer. Other motives of similar tendency crowd into the mind; and Satan well knew how to present them in their full force to that loving and susceptible heart. It was the climax of his artifice and audacity.

His aspect, in all probability, continued to be that of a loving, courteous, and sympathising friend, anxious to relieve from the impending trouble and to facilitate the attainment of the objects on which the Lord was intent, by an easier path than that which lay before Him.

Our Lord subsequently described him as "a liar, and the father of it." Though he was not to be trusted, yet sometimes a liar speaks true. If this proposal could but be met, would it not obviate much that was grievous and deeply to be deplored?

What was there that lay behind this plausible mask? Was it not that Jesus was invited to perform an act of homage to Satan, thereby avowing that He owed all to him, and held authority under him as a feudatory under his liege lord? Instead of man being delivered, his ruin would have been perpetuated! Satan's empire would for ever have been established, being acknowledged by the Son of God as the rightful sovereign! On the way this temptation was met hung all man's destiny, all happiness here and hereafter.

The reply is the same as before, "It is written!"

The code of instructions for the guidance of Israel, ever present to the mind of the Lord and deeply imbedded in His heart, furnishes an immediate answer.

God alone is to be worshipped and served! Such is the command. The obedient Son and Servant can on no account disobey. Whatever the objects to be attained, this law can in no wise be departed from. Whatever the depth of the afflictions, however widely spread or greatly prolonged, the servant of God can never depart from each and every declaration of HIS will. He submits Himself altogether to His God. He is governed solely by His declared pleasure.

On viewing this part of the life of our blessed Lord we learn what perfect obedience is. Many men and women have hazarded their lives, or laid them down at the call of duty or affection; have confronted the cannon's mouth, faced the terrors of the plague or the cholera in ministering to the dying; have shut themselves up in hospitals, or even lazarus-houses, amidst most loathsome forms of disease; have submitted to immediate martyrdom, or the slower martyrdom in carrying the tidings of divine love amidst the burning sands of the torrid zone, or the frozen arctic deserts.

Great and noble as are such examples of devotedness, they cannot be compared with what is here put before us. Human notions and human feelings intermingle themselves with the grandest actings of the human heart. If love toward God be the impelling motive, in none can it be found entirely devoid of secondary objects, uncontaminated, alas! with self-seeking in some one of its many forms. In Jesus it was perfectly pure, single, and disinterested.

Men were perishing. It was in His power to let us perish as we deserved. But it was His Father's will that we should be saved. In concurring with and embracing this desire of His Father, it was incumbent on Him that He should abandon the glory He had with Him before the world was, and assume the position of a servant—literally a slave.

Then in the thorough fulfilment of that position there came the entire abnegation of self on which we have been meditating. And this was but the preparation, the preliminary ordeal, testing His fitness for the work which He had undertaken to do, and which culminated on the cross.

So soon as the fearful trial had been accomplished the angels, whom the Father had given charge over Him, hastened eagerly to minister to His wants.

May we have grace given us to learn of the Holy One of God how to obey, humbly treading in His

footsteps, and looking forward, like Him, to the glory that shall be revealed in resurrection.

"QUENCH NOT THE SPIRIT."

ALL light, and life, and joy flow to us through the Holy Spirit's mighty working; and darkness, death, and sorrow must necessarily follow if His power be resisted or His operations be restrained. How solemn, then, these important words, "QUENCH NOT THE SPIRIT."

The primary application of these words is undoubtedly to the Church *collectively*; though *every* Christian should carefully watch, lest he personally neglect His leading or in any way resist or hinder His voice.

As *individuals* we are entreated to put away every form of evil, whether in thought, or word, or deed, that we grieve not that gentle Holy Spirit (see Eph. iv. 21-32, v. 1-21); while *collectively* the special word of exhortation is—"Quench not the Spirit: despise not prophesyings."

There are many ways in which we may quench the Spirit. For instance, formal prayer must necessarily do so. He is always *present* with the assembled saints, ready to help their infirmities by unfolding the things of Christ, and to fill both heart and mouth with prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving. This is a very solemn truth, and if duly weighed would greatly help us in both taking and keeping the only scriptural and humble place of dependence upon the Spirit of God to lead our prayers and praises.

But more than this, the Holy Ghost does verily give distinctive and abiding gifts, so that one man is made a teacher, another a pastor, and another an evangelist, &c.; and such persons are responsible to the Lord, to stir up and use the gift thus bestowed upon them.

Thus when the Lord's people are gathered together to worship Him, we "are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices,

acceptable to God by Christ Jesus;” and “to one is given, by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit.” Again — “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth.”

It will greatly help us in the understanding of this important subject if we distinguish between the distinct spheres of worship and service which belong to the Church of God. The one, our *assembling ourselves* together to worship our God and Father, to hear what He has to say to us, and to feast together in His Holy presence. The other, *individual* service to the world, by preaching the Gospel, or in any way seeking to win souls for Christ, and also *individual* effort to minister to His people’s need, whether spiritual or temporal, according to the ability which we have received from Him.

In the *first*, we *draw near* to God, and are privileged to enter into the holiest, the very secret presence of our God. In the *second*, we *go forth*, as sent by the Lord, to labour for Him.

In the *first*, we gather *together* as purged worshippers, the white-robed priesthood, to surround the Lord Himself, to worship Him in spirit and in truth. In the *second*, we go forth as *individual* servants, having received our appointed service from Him, and seek to use the ability and power which He has given for His glory and for the blessing of others.

In the *first*, we are gathered in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man, where the LORD JESUS HIMSELF is *the minister*. Believers do not stand there as minister and people; the Lord Jesus Himself is the Minister, and every one should be looking to *Him*, expecting to hear His voice and to receive direct blessing from Him.

In the *second*, individual servants of Christ, as sent by Him, gather saints or sinners together, purposing

to minister of that which they have received and learnt of their Lord and Master. In such case the relationship of *minister and people* may be correct and scriptural. The assembly is not gathered around the Lord as *worshippers*, but persons are gathered together before the Lord to hear what He may say to them through one or more gifted servants of Christ.

The *first* applies only to assemblies of believers; the *second* embraces all the individual service which love to the Lord and to souls devises and effects.

In the *first*, the gifted brother takes his place in the assembly as a member of the body, and waits upon the Lord, to be used in any way which He may then and there direct. In the *second*, having sought wisdom and strength from the Lord, he goes forth to his appointed labour of love, looking for the energy and power of the Spirit to enable him to do the work which he has undertaken.

In *both* cases we are entirely dependent upon the Spirit of God; and His power alone can render our service acceptable or effectual.

The distinction between these spheres of worship and service has been greatly overlooked by Christians, and this has led to much confusion of things that differ.

We are prone to forget that, as believers, our place of worship is in the holiest, in heaven itself. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus . . . let us draw near," &c. &c. This is not only our individual privilege, but our true and proper place of *collective* worship.

No unbeliever, no uncleansed soul, can enter there. Such may possibly be mingled in bodily presence among the assembled believers, but they do not enter the true place of worship. They are actually *outside*. They are *not* worshippers, but beholders of the joy of God's children. They are *not* participators in the blessing, though possibly, while looking on, some desires may

be kindled within them after salvation, and they may receive blessing from on high.

When believers are thus gathered together unto the Lord Jesus Christ, He is as verily in their midst as if visible to the bodily eye. This truth may give us a true and scriptural conception of the worship and ministry which befit such a season.

Did we *see* the Lord Jesus, were He visibly in our midst as the Leader of our worship (Psalm xxii. 22), would not each eye be fixed on Him, each ear be listening to Him, each mouth be ready to do His bidding? Should we select hymns to sing, or Scriptures to read, *before* we came into His presence? Should we not rather reverently and lovingly sit before Him, and wait for Him to point out what He would have us sing or read?

He is equally able and willing to do so *now*, by His Spirit, as if He were visibly upon the earth. Only let us give Him the opportunity, by gathering around Him without any previous arrangement of our intended worship, and if the true language of our hearts is, “My soul, wait thou *only* upon God; for my expectation is from Him,” He will so surely reveal Himself and guide our songs of praise, that with one mouth and one heart we shall glorify our God and Father.

So also with prayer. Were He visibly seated among us, would there not be the pouring out of the heart’s varied need before Him? And thus our prayers, far from being cold, or formal, or forced, would be in the Spirit and of the Spirit.

Whenever even two or three are gathered together in His name, *there* He surely is according to His gracious promise. And is it not evident that prearranged prayers, calling upon one another to pray, or deciding beforehand *who* shall pray, must necessarily quench the Spirit, and hinder His blessed and gracious working? Never, never will He fail to help us when we take the place of weakness and ignorance,—as those who “know not

what to pray for as we ought." If the Lord's promise is, that in the hour of danger the Holy Spirit will teach His people what to say to *man* without premeditation, how much more will He help us in pouring out our hearts to *our Father*?

Nor is this less true with regard to the ministry of the word. When we are thus gathered *unto Him*, He is ready and willing to speak to us. He knows our need, He considers our state, and by the power of His Spirit will guide some of His servants to speak the word of comfort, of admonition, of exhortation, or rebuke, as He sees is most suited to us.

A prearranged sermon, or a prepared subject, may therefore at such seasons be altogether unsuited, although both may be acceptable service to the Lord under other circumstances. We have gathered together around the Lord in the holiest, to hear the voice of Jesus, to wait upon our God, and to get blessing from Him. And though He mostly uses the gifts which He has previously bestowed upon different brethren, and leads them to utter what they have already learned from Him in that meditation upon His word which should be their constant employ, yet each one should be waiting upon the Lord, to know whether He would have him minister on that occasion, and if so, as to *what* and *when* He would have him speak.

He is the true God, and He is true to His promises and engagements; and blessed and manifest is the result when His people have faith to take Him at His word in this matter.

May He so press these truths upon our hearts that we may discern between things that differ, and learn to be in true subjection to the Spirit of God, whether as worshippers in the holiest, amidst the assembled saints, or as individual servants who have received some special service from the Lord. And let us take care that we neither grieve nor quench that Holy Spirit, by whom we are sealed until the day of redemption.

“GLORIOUS THINGS ARE SPOKEN OF THEE.”

NUMBERS xxiii., xxiv.

THIS is a wonderful and most interesting scene. Here is God looking down upon His people, and speaking out His thoughts of them, and His purposes and power toward them, in the presence of an enemy. Let us draw near and hearken, for all this concerns ourselves.

God has been desired by their enemy to curse the people, and truly if He had dealt with them according to their deserts, the curse *must* have come upon them, for it is written, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” And what had they done but break the holy law of God from the very moment they had received it? What but provoke their holy One by their rebellion, and murmuring, and unbelief, from the day they were brought out of Egypt until this day? Lying in the plain, they are all unconscious of what is going on, while God, the holy and *jealous* God, who will *not* give His glory to another, is challenged to speak His mind concerning them.

“But He Himself knew what He would do.” All had been provided for, and this “occasion” against them, sought by the malice of their foe, only brings out more clearly to view the *depths* of “the *riches* of His grace” who had undertaken for them.

How, then, came it about?

Before speaking a word “either good or bad,” Jehovah placed between His own pure eyes and their impurity that which effectually hid and put away their sins, and made them “all fair” in His sight, *that* which could bring down upon them *blessing*, and *only* blessing. God Himself was “*for* them,” and He so wrapped them up, as it were, in *Christ* that He could

only see and speak of present perfection and coming power and victories to the end of time.

There were the seven altars (Christ) and the offerings on them (Christ again), all renewed each time the Lord would speak of His people, and in the ascending smoke of the perfect (sevenfold) offering "God smelled a sweet savour" of His Beloved, who said, "Lo, I come to *do Thy will, O God,*" and He was more than *satisfied*—He was "*well pleased.*" No marvel, then, that "glorious things were spoken" of a people thus seen and "accepted in the Beloved."

Let us glance for a few moments at one or two of the "glorious things spoken" in these chapters.

"*They shall not be reckoned among the nations.*" (Chap. xxiii. 9.) The nations that forget God (as all do left to themselves) shall be cast into hell (Psalm ix. 17.); but these have "found grace." They are "separated from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." (Exod. xxxiii. 16.) They are set high above the nations, and shall be enabled to "*fear God as long as the sun and moon endureth;*" and it is written, "In the *fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and His children shall have a place of refuge.*"

They are "*blessed altogether.*" So are we in a higher sense, for we are "blessed with all *spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ.*" (Eph. i. and 1 Peter i.)

"*God is not a man, that he should lie.*" No! He meant what He said when He declared, "I have *blotted out as a cloud thy sins,*" and "I have *loved you.*"

"*Nor the son of man, that He should repent.*" Therefore, this forgiveness and this love can never be recalled: "Their sins and iniquities I will *remember no more.*" (Heb. x. 17.) "Having loved His own . . . He loved them unto the *end.*" "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also *will do.*"

“*He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor seen perverseness in Israel.*” How completely is sin put away! Even God’s eye sees none. “Blessed,” indeed, “is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” (Psalm xxxii. 1.)

“*The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them.*” And, oh, happy assurance for them while still groaning over evil within: “*He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet.*” (1 Cor. xv. 25.) “*He shall subdue our iniquities,*” as well as *pardon* them. (See Micah vii. 18, 19.)

“*Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion. He shall not lie down till he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain.*” The people here share in the victories of the King. “Blessed be the Lord my strength, who teacheth *my* hands to war, and *my* fingers to fight.” (Psalm cxliv. 1.) “*He shall thrust them out, and say (unto us), Destroy them.*” “Thanks be unto God, who always causeth *us* to triumph *in* Christ.” “So fight I, not as one that beateth the air . . . I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.” (1 Cor. ix. 26, 27.)

“*How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!*” (xxiv. 5.) “*He will rejoice over thee with singing.*” (Zephaniah iii. 17.) “*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*” (3 John 4.) The Lord their Shepherd has led them, and brought them into the “green pastures.” He sees them now encamped beside the “still waters,” and He can for the present “rest in His love.”

“*As the valleys are they spread forth.*” “*He giveth grace unto the lowly.*” “*With the lowly is wisdom.*” Such are in a position to receive.

“*As gardens by the river’s side.*” “*My soul, wait thou only upon God: for my expectation is from Him.*” Waiting upon Him thus for *all* supplies, and also for “His commands to do them,” what is the result? “*He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of*

water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season. His leaf also shall *not wither*." (Psalm i. 2, 3.) He shall speak words *for* God, as well as bear fruit *to* God. Moreover, his "*peace shall be as a river*."

"*His King shall be higher than Agag*." Agag was king of the Amalekites, against whom God had sworn war for ever, for they were enemies to the people of God (see Exod. xvii. 8-16); and they well represent to us "the flesh," which always "lusteth against the spirit," bringing *us* into captivity. "It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." "*Amalek shall perish for ever*."

"Agag" means "flaming;" a terribly significant name, which speaks for itself. "So is the *tongue* among our members." (James iii.) "The tongue *is* a fire." "It *setteth* on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of *hell*." And further, like its source, it is "unquenchable" by human power. "The tongue can no man tame." "It boasteth great things," and may fairly take its place as king, for we are told that he who can restrain the evil of the tongue is a "perfect man, and able also to bridle his whole body." And "who is sufficient?" Alas! no one. Have we not to confess with sorrow "in many things we all offend?" "Murmurings," "wrath, strife," "great swelling words," "sharp swords," "railing," "bitterness," "evil-speaking," "deceit," "guile," "lying one to another."

The evil principle that uses the tongue as its instrument thus is doubtless what is referred to in this chapter of James rather than the tongue *itself*, as may be gathered from the imagery used—"a fire, a world of iniquity." This is an Agag, with whom there must be no truce on our part; and when we have learnt or are learning our own powerlessness, how welcome and precious is the assurance that our "King shall be *higher than Agag*."

This king was subdued and destroyed in the reign of the *first* representative of Israel's true King. (See

1 Sam. xv. 32, 33.) And so shall it be with us when our King reigns in us. He shall hold it in prison till the day when "He shall destroy it for ever." He shall then take it away—root it out of the land of the living. (Psalm lii. 4, 5.)

Meanwhile the tongue itself, that hitherto "*unruly member*," when yielded to God shall be brought into *subjection*, made an instrument of *righteousness*, and filled with "the law of *kindness*." (Prov. xxxi. 26.)

THE CHRISTIAN'S HONOUR:

POINTS OF HONOUR IN A CHRISTIAN'S LIFE.

It is sometimes interesting to notice rare words in the New Testament which are used with peculiar force, and it is well to connect together the various instances in which they occur.

In the Greek Testament we find the word *φιλοτιμέομαι* used three times by the apostle Paul in his epistles, and which we would render—"I make it a point of honour."

This word beautifully harmonizes with the position of the believer in Christ as under the law of liberty—one in whom the law of penalty has given place to the law of love, and the service of the slave to the higher obligation of honour. To Paul Christ had become "an honour" (1 Peter ii. 7: see margin), and his ambition was to become an honour to his Lord—a diadem of beauty in the hand of his God.

In the three passages alluded to the same Greek word is severally rendered "labour," "study," "strive;" and they will be found to embrace the three spheres of Christian life, in which this feature of Christian character is to be manifested.

First, in relation to God—to please Him. And this includes the two following.

Secondly, in relation to social matters and domestic life—how to live.

Thirdly, in relation to our service in the church or in the world—to obey our call.

The first passage to which we will refer is that in 2 Cor. v. 9: "Wherefore we make it a point of honour (Authorized Version 'labour'), that, whether absent or present, we may be *well-pleasing* to Him" (not 'may be accepted of Him' as in A. V.) The point of honour here is to *please* Him.

It may be well to retrace a little the line of thought which led the apostle to this holy determination; for the Spirit of God would lead us by the same path to the same result. We must connect together chapters iii. iv. and v., and may commence by noticing that sentence in chapter iii. 5—"Our sufficiency" (or competency) "is of God." What an assurance to possess! What a power is contained in these few words! A power open to faith, and within the reach of all who can lay hold of the promise—"My grace is sufficient for thee." It is of essential importance that we should lay hold on the power which can accomplish the result presented to us, or we shall be looking at our calling in Christ with an impotent longing that will never bring us to the realized blessing.

We are told, that "without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Faith in God lies at the root of all our life and walk and salvation. And faith is a substance, a reality, that brings the power of God within our reach, and, whether for personal holiness or for efficiency in service, brings near what God has promised. It imparts what the soul longs for, even the power to please, and the joy of that "well done" which may ever be heard in the whisperings of God to the faithful soul—a foretaste of that welcome word that shall greet him who has lived to please God, and made that his one ambition.

Incompetency as of ourselves, and competency as of

God, is the great truth we need continually to bear in mind. Of the former we are often but too painfully conscious, but of the latter too painfully the reverse. This competency leads into liberty; for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. And we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory." But while *all* belongs to those who have "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," we have it "in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

Yet how prone are we to lament over the weakness and worthlessness of the earthen vessel, rather than to remember "the treasure" and "the excellency of the power." Death and life both lie in the pathway we are called to tread (see chapter iv. 7-18); but in fellowship with Christ we learn not to faint, but to find the renewings of God every day sufficient for all our need, till the day of the glory.

This leads us to the subject that immediately precedes the verse we are contemplating, and that is the "absent" and "present" conditions of the child of God, regarding both of which he is full of confident assurance, knowing that he hath "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." All this wonderful provision God has made for His people—a sufficiency to meet all their daily need—a promise of being with Christ when they die, and an assurance of a body of glory, a house not made with hands, when they see their Lord and awake in His likeness. Having all this, says the apostle, "we make it a point of honour to *please* Him;" for "the love of Christ constraineth us."

Jesus said, "I do always those things that please Him." And the Father bore witness from heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Into this, which is the real spirit of sonship, we are

called to enter—a spirit that says not in any matter, great or small, “What is the harm?” but, “Will it please?”

Paul prays for the Colossians that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all well-pleasing (*i.e.* pleasing Him in every thing). And the prayer for the Hebrews is, “Now the God of peace . . . make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ.” John likewise, connecting pleasing God with obedience to Him, writes: “Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.”

How important it is to keep in mind the connection between our pleasing God and the openness of the ear to hear what He says, and then further, the openness of His ear to hear what we say. Obedience in little things—the habit of seeking to please God in little things—will bring about such a consciousness of God's open ear to us in little things, that there will be constant communion between the Father and the child. If we are content to please God on great occasions, we can claim to realize His love only in great things, and in all the infinite variety of lesser circumstances which makes up the chief sum of life's history we shall practically be strangers to God.

The aim of life should be to please God in *all*, and that not with a slavish dread that fears anger, but with the loving confidence of a child that knows his heavenly Father is not hard to please. Ah, no! No one so easily pleased as our gracious God; and God would not have us think of Him as difficult to please; for this would savour of the thoughts of him who said, “I knew thee that thou wast a hard Master.”

Under the Levitical law the smallest command, as well as the mightiest, was equally incumbent and imperative, resting on that oft repeated expression, “For I am the Lord your God.” In the sermon on the

mount our Saviour lays down the principle, that "who-soever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven."

The aim of pleasing God is then the one aim which should ever stand uppermost in the heart of the child of God; for he is called to bear in mind that God so loved us as to give His only begotten Son. On *that* gift hangs the reasonableness of that service which the love of God delights in, and which should ever be joyfully rendered as the highest and holiest ambition of the child of God, on the ground of those mercies of which he has been made a partaker.

The second passage where the word we are referring to is used is the following: "That ye make it a point of honour (A. V. 'study') to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we have commanded you." (1 Thess. iv. 11.) The peculiar interest attaching to this verse is, that the apostle uses so high and strong an expression regarding such homely things as are contained in these precepts. But this is its very beauty, as it shows how high a value God sets on what we are apt to look upon as very common-place.

The very essence of the glory of the gospel is, that it elevates every common duty, and exalts every homely action; and perhaps there is nothing we find it really harder to do than to enter into God's thoughts in these matters. To please God in the higher walks of life, in the higher departments of our spiritual being, we seem to feel intuitively to be reasonable, if not easy; but in these domestic and personal matters of life it seems to be almost out of place to be told to make it your ambition to be quiet, to do your own business, and to work with your own hands. Nevertheless it is often here that many who in other matters may be exemplary make terrible shipwreck of their Christian character.

It is not so easy to be quiet, nor to be occupying oneself about one's own special work as might be at first sight imagined; nor is it easy to go on working with one's own hands, not to enrich oneself, but to enrich others, that, as the apostle says, "ye may have to give to him that lacketh." The elimination of self and selfishness in our personal walk and ways is our difficulty, and must be our aim, for it is this that draws the line between the selfish laboriousness of the man of this world, and the quiet unselfish business life of the Christian who occupies his place in obedience to the will of his God, and not from secondary motives, nay, not even to get a livelihood: he works because he is commanded so to do.

All the various relationships of life come under the principle of this verse, and thus this point of honour becomes of such deep practical importance. It is intended to influence and mould the relation of husband and wife, of parent and child, of master and servant; to each of whom comes home that little word, so full of secret blessing and felicity, *Be quiet*.

It is not the bustling, noisy activity of the unquiet world that has to be imitated, but the noiseless activity of one who is never idle, and never in a bustle. We are too apt to look at these things as if they were the peculiar possession of persons of certain temperaments, and to forget that God would stamp *quietness* on all our domestic and social relationships, that so we might be known by all around as quiet men and women who know what the "waters of quietness" are, by which the Good Shepherd leads His sheep. Thus we might become as rivers of blessing in a world of unrest and disquietude, running softly and deeply, where all is noise and turmoil.

There is also much importance to be attached to the second specification of character here given, *minding your own business*. Each has his appointed work in the economy of life as truly given by God as the gifts and

appointments of Christ in the church. Each has a work which none can perform but the person to whom it is committed. There are no proxy workers in the kingdom of God.

The work may be left undone, but no one can do it for us. No one has time for more than that appointed work which God has given, which is sufficient to fill the time and life of each. May we all seek to know what the appointed work is, whether of waiting or suffering, or of labouring and toiling.

Faith ever asks, "What wilt thou have me to do?" and listens for the answer, and waits for it. The providence of God gives us the *sphere* in which we are to move, and in that sphere obedience to the written word is to be our principle of action.

The apostle adds further, *working with your own hands*. This connects the position of the Christian in the world, with that into which the fall brought man, when in consequence of sin God said, "By the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread." These obligations of the fall remain on us, and in the discharge of these we carry out the mind of God, and learn lessons of untold value for time and for eternity.

Herein did the Son of God set us an example, who remained hidden from the world and almost unknown in Nazareth till He began to be about thirty years of age; known only as the carpenter, the son of the carpenter Joseph. Was there no object in all this? And can we forego what was the appointed portion of the Son of Man?

No training for world-wide usefulness is equal to that which occupies the hands and trains the soul, and gives reality and truth to what, alas, too often becomes unrealized theology,—something into which the man has never grown. Jesus grew in stature, and in knowledge, and in favour with God and man, and all God's truth must be grown into, and can never be learnt as a lesson in a school-room.

The remaining passage where the above-named Greek word occurs is Rom. xv. 20, 21, "So have I made it a point of honour (A.V. 'strived') to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation. But as it is written, To whom He was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand." God had called Paul for foundation work (See 1 Cor. iii. 10), and his holy ambition was to fulfil his ministry in the exact line of that service to which he had been called of God.

Here lies a point of honour for every Christian to decide for himself, What is the place of service given me of God in the church? For this is not as the last, a social, a domestic matter; it concerns the church and its ministry. One man has to plant, and to do this well is his point of honour; another has to water, and to do that well will be his. Paul had finished his foundation work in Asia and Greece, and now he was going, in purpose, beyond Rome into Spain, to preach the gospel of the grace of God there also.

Why is there such indistinctness in the minds of so many as to the line of service into which they are called of God?—an indistinctness of conviction which is a source perhaps of very much of the feebleness in service which we see. Is it not often the result of first steps wrongly taken?—a commencement of Christian life with some standard less than "Deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow me?" The consequence of necessity is, that a single eye is wanting, and therefore all is not light, but all is often dark.

Paul's notice of his first steps is, that he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. He consulted not with flesh and blood, either in himself or in others. He made the Lord his counsellor, and when he had received a command he asked no questions—he went forward. It is deserving of notice likewise how Paul brought the written word to bear upon his course.

Probably the secret cause of all our mistakes, in matters in which we have no explicit direction as to the course we should take, may be found in some neglected act of obedience, which if noticed in time and given heed to, would have prevented the mistake for which we may not be ready at first sight to hold ourselves responsible. As we noticed at the beginning, the Christian has a competency in God for all his circumstances, and his daily aim must be to rise up to that, making no allowances for failing or shortcoming. The gracious Master will make allowances for us, we need not fear; and if we sleep when we ought to watch, let us leave it for Him to say, "the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."

May we be enabled to lay hold of these points of honour in the Christian life, and then will our pathway be as that of the just, that shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day, and so whether before God, or in the family and social life, or in the service we are called to render, we shall have the sweet assurance that we please Him, whom to please should be our highest joy, our brightest glory.

DOING AND UNDERSTANDING.

"If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."—JOHN vii. 17.

It may be asked by some, how can the doing of God's will help us in understanding the doctrines of God's word? Before anyone can do the will of God (or as the better interpretation would be, "is willing to do") he must learn what that will is, and be taught of the Holy Ghost to do it.

When the heart of anyone is so disposed by the grace and power of the Spirit, he rises above the prejudices of pride and self-righteousness; he distrusts himself, for he finds out his weakness and the need of

an arm to lean upon; he diligently seeks the aid of divine teaching, the strength which cometh from above, that he may neither deceive himself nor those around him.

The teacher who is not sent of God, will in one way or other "seek his own glory," because he has no higher principle or motive of action than corrupt fallen nature can suggest; but every faithful believer in Christ Jesus delights to do the will of God, "seeking His glory that sent him," because he is "not under the law, but under grace." He obeys, but it is in faith; he works, but it is from a sense of the Father's love to him in His Son. "The love of Christ constraineth him," influencing his life and character, giving a new motive for every action.

Thus he serves God with a thankful spirit and without fear, striving to do all the good he can to man, for the sake of Him who loved him and gave Himself for him. Every act done in faith is an act of fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

The believer goes forth strengthened and refreshed by the doctrine and promises of "the word of life," and waiting in the appointed ways he grows in the knowledge of the glorious God-man; he sees more of the beauty and perfection of His salvation-work, and depending daily upon Him for every blessing, he enjoys more of the "things that accompany salvation," and understands the blessedness of that peace which a life of faith brings. He rejoices in the promises, knowing that He who has promised is able to perform.

Love is not an effort. It is the willing, easy flowing forth of the affections towards one whose love we know, and whose character and ways are lovely in our eyes. It is while we meditate upon Jesus that we learn to love and delight in Him, not only because He loved us, but because of His own perfect and infinite loveliness.

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES.

THE Jewish nation, specially whilst in the wilderness, is generally acknowledged to be a type of the Church of God, and to contain, in its constitution and history, type within type (1 Cor. x. 6), serving unto the example and *shadow* of heavenly things. (Heb. iii. iv. viii. ix. x.)

But whilst we prayerfully study the Old Testament in the way taught us by the Apostle, applying each part to that which the Holy Spirit applied it, we must be very careful not to lose sight of this important truth, that the *earthly* types of the Jewish dispensation were but “a *shadow* of good things to come, and not the very *image* of the things;” and that whilst, on the one hand, the Jewish nation was called to an *earthly* inheritance, and the laws and principles of the kingdom were suited to their condition as an *earthly* people—the Church of God, on the other hand, is a *heavenly* family, and is not of the earth, but is chosen, and gathered *out from* the world, to be the *heavenly* witness for Christ in *heavenly* things, during His rejection by the Jews and the nations of the earth. Its calling is to follow in the footsteps of Christ, walking in all those *heavenly* principles of grace, love, and long-suffering, which He, as our example, has set forth.

It is of the utmost importance, as involving the honour and glory of our blessed Lord and Master, that we should clearly apprehend this difference; because the necessary result of our mistaking the shadows or earthly things, for the substance or heavenly things, and applying them together with the principles of the Jewish kingdom, to the Church of God, will be to learn to walk as *earthly* Jews, and to mind *earthly* things, and thus we shall greatly dishonour our Lord, who has “called us to be saints” as those who are

“raised up together, and made to sit together in *heavenly places* in Christ Jesus,” to witness for Him in *heavenly* things. May the Lord now give us wisdom, and the spirit of a sound mind to consider this.

The Lord dealt with the Jews in the *flesh*; they were a nation of natural men, an earthly nation, and their blessings were earthly blessings in the *land*; they were called to mind *earthly* things. (Deut. viii. 7, 13.) But the Lord looks upon the Church as in the *Spirit*, and not as in the *flesh*. As regards the *flesh*, He looks upon it as crucified in Christ, and the Church is ever to be seeking to realize its deliverance from the *flesh*. It is therefore called to walk in the *Spirit*, for “He hath blessed us with all *spiritual* blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”

To mind *earthly* things now is destruction, for “our conversation is in heaven.” (Phil. iv.) To walk as men, or to recognize any qualification in the *flesh* by descent, succession, or otherwise in the things of God, is to be carnal. (1 Cor. iii. 3-5.) “So then they that are in the *flesh* cannot please God.”

The occasion of this great change in God’s dealings was this. God sent His only begotten Son into the world, “and the world knew Him not. He came to His own (the Jews) and His own received Him not.” He came with earthly blessings; “the blind received their sight, the lame walked, the lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard, the dead were raised up.” He came to proclaim “glory to God in the highest, and on *earth* peace,” but He was rejected, crucified, and received back again into heaven.

The rejection of Christ by the world is God’s perfect witness as to the profitless nature of the *flesh*, and proclaims aloud that “the whole world lieth in the wicked one.” In the cross, man’s entire hatred to God’s wondrous love is fully manifested: the world is now left in the hands of Satan, whom it has chosen in preference to Christ; and he is declared to be the

prince of this world, and will continue to reign over it until its rightful Lord returns, who has been rejected. He has left the earth saying, "I will go and return to my place, *till* they (the Jewish nation) acknowledge their offence, and seek my face." (Hosea v. 15.)

The Lord, during this time of the rejection of His Son, who has gone "into a far country to receive a kingdom for Himself, *and to return*," and, during the reign of Satan over the world, is *gathering* His Church "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation," to follow in Christ's steps, and consequently to bear the reproach of Christ from the world.

Now is the time of God's *long-suffering* towards the world. He does not now acknowledge any nation in the earth, upon all of which sentence of judgment is passed, but is *gathering out* from that which is to be judged, into heavenly blessing. All hope of blessing to the *earth* ceased when Christ was cast out of it, and when Satan was declared to be the god of this world; and no blessing can come upon the earth until it receives Him, or rather until He comes again to take the dominion. (Rom. xi. 26; 1 Tim. vi. 15.)

It is by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead that God has given assurance unto all men that He will *judge the world* (habitable earth) in righteousness, by that man whom He hath ordained. Therefore *judgment* is the only thing which can *now* come upon the *earth*, and its earthly things, because it has rejected Christ and chosen judgment. Moreover, the resurrection of Christ shows, that during this time of God's long-suffering, whilst judgment is delayed, there can only be blessing and security in *heaven*, and heavenly things.

We see therefore, that the Church is called *out* from *earthly* connection, and consequently from judgment, by its union with Christ risen. The earth is to be judged, but the Church has been judged in the cross; and to establish it in *connection* with the world, or any nation

of the world, is to associate it with that which Christ is coming to judge. The place of the Church is in spirit to be risen and in heaven with Christ, and therefore in His absence to be the light of the world, even as He was, whilst in the world.

The things of the *earth* were given by God to the Jews (Josh. i. 11), and therefore they might set their affections upon them; they might build goodly houses, and multiply silver and gold, herds and flocks (Deut. viii. 12, 13), and God promised to bless them with all the increase of the earth. (xxviii. 11.) But the Church has died to the world. (Gal. vi. 14; Col. iii. 3.) It is not of the world. (John xvii. 16.) *Heavenly* blessings are the portion of the Church. (Eph. i. 3; 1 Pet. i. 4.) We are therefore told to set our affections "on *things above*, not on things on the earth," to forsake all, and follow Christ, and thus lay up treasure *in heaven*.

The Jews were to fight with the sword against their enemies. (Deut. vii. 2; Numb. x. 9.) But the Christian should not go to war, because "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal," for we wrestle not against *flesh and blood*, but against *spiritual* wickedness; therefore we are to put on the whole armour of God, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and only to use the *sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*. Wherefore "love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you."

Among the Jews an injured person might take vengeance (Numb. xxxi. 2; Deut. xix. 6, 21); but the direction to the believer in Christ, who is not under the law, but under grace, is, "Avenge not yourselves," but "overcome evil with good;" "not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing."

The Jew was to enforce, by law, righteous restitution for loss or injury sustained. (Ex. xxi. 24—36.)

But going to law is altogether condemned by the Apostle, for the Church is not under law, but under grace; it is therefore to walk in love, which seeketh not its own, but endureth all things. "Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because you go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" "Resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if a man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."

Earthly rank and kingly power were owned of God among the Jews, as stations in which He would honour His own earthly people. (1 Kings ix. 5.) But Jesus says, "My kingdom is not of this world," "Now is my kingdom not from hence." Again, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But *ye shall not be so*: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve; for *I appoint unto you a kingdom* (not yet come), as my Father hath appointed unto me:" for "if we suffer with Him we *shall also reign with Him*."

In the Jewish nation, riches were a mark of God's favour (1 Kings iii. 3), but our Lord declares that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. xix. 23); and the disciples who had been instructed as earthly Jews, and had not yet fully learnt the heavenly principles of Christ's kingdom, immediately exclaimed, "Who then can be saved?" But the Lord's word to them was "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven," even the unsearchable riches of Christ, as those which are alone of value in the heavenly kingdom.

The Jews had in their land an appointed place, and a consecrated building, where God dwelt and was wor-

shipped. (1 Kings viii.) The Church has no such defined earthly temple; its place of worship is in heaven (Hebrews x. 19--22), its worship is spiritual: *wherever* two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ, *there* is He in the midst of them. The body of Christ, the Church, is the temple in which God now dwells, "Know ye not that *ye are the temple of God*, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

The Jewish earthly temple was "adorned with goodly stones and gifts." But the Church now is a *spiritual house* composed of believers, who are as "lively stones," "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit," whose adorning is not outward, but the hidden man of the heart, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.

The Jews had among them on earth one holding the special office of high priest. But our High Priest is Jesus, who is set at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

God chose from amongst Israel the family of Aaron to be priests (those who were ceremonially holy), to minister in holy things; for the congregation were not holy, because they were not like the sons of Aaron, anointed with the blood and the oil. (Lev. viii. 30.) To be a son of Aaron according to the flesh, gave a right to the priesthood, whether he were a godly or an ungodly man, for God was dealing with Israel *in the flesh*. But now it is quite otherwise. The *whole* Church of God is a royal Priesthood, "God's heritage," chosen through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ (typified by the oil and the blood); and none now should fill any office, or labour in the Church of God, who are not thus sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and separated to the service of God by the blood of Jesus Christ, any more than could the congregation of Israel, who were not anointed with the blood and the oil, take upon themselves the office of the sons of Aaron.

The Levites were appointed to teach the children of Israel. Their appointment was successional, that is, *in the flesh*; it descended to their children. (Deut. xxiii. 10; 2 Chron. xxx. 22.) But now the *Spirit* divideth His gifts "to every man severally as He will." Succession in the flesh is now set aside, and the Holy Ghost qualifies and appoints spiritual men to teach in the Church of God. Ministry belongs only to the members of the body of Christ; and some only are placed in the Church as Evangelists, Pastors, Teachers, &c.; and therefore "as every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth."

The Jewish nation had laws for the payment of the *tithe*, or a tenth, unto the Lord of all their earthly increase. (Lev. xxvii. 30.) This was for the maintenance of the temple worship, and for the support of those who ministered about holy things. But now there is no earthly temple, no temple made with hands. "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands. *Heaven* is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?"

Yet "God hath ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel;" that they should go forth, taking *nothing* of the Gentiles—the unconverted. (Luke x. 6; 3 John 7.)

The Gospel is the Gospel of *grace*, which is the very reverse of *law*; therefore the constraining *love* of Christ, and the *leading* of the Spirit, are to be the only incentives to induce us to contribute our carnal things to the support of the Gospel: the saint is to "give *not grudgingly*, or of *necessity*; for God loveth a cheerful giver."

And now, "holy brethren, partakers of the *heavenly calling*, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? What was lawful in

a Jew we now perceive would in us be the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; and whosoever loves these, the love of the Father is not in him. Christ's kingdom is not *now* of this world, but the whole world lieth in the wicked one. The devil is the prince of this world, and the god of this world; and to be of the world now, is to be of the devil. Awful reflection!

The saint has lost his national or earthly character by his union with Christ risen; and we need to remember that the world obtained its national distinctions through rebellion against God at the building of the tower of Babel. The Lord does not deal with the world now, or with any part of it, as He once dealt with the Jews. He is bearing with it in long-suffering, and is sending forth the message of His love, warning men of coming judgment, and telling of deliverance by Christ. God is now *taking out* of the world a people for His name. (Rom. xi. 5.) And this people is to be "a kind of *first-fruits* of His creatures," having the *first-fruits* of the Spirit.

Scripture does not speak of a time of universal knowledge of God in the earth during this dispensation; but throughout the New Testament as well as the Old Testament, it is declared that *judgment* shall precede that time of universal blessing.

But whilst Scripture abounds with this prophetic testimony respecting the world's judgment, it also as fully declares the apostasy of the professing Church (Rom. xi. 22; 2 Tim. iii.; 2 Peter ii.; Jude); and the character of this apostasy is shown to be departure from those *heavenly* principles of obedience already referred to, and the substitution of those which the world can acknowledge and approve, and which must therefore be *earthly* and sensual (natural) in their character.

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away

with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness” (2 Peter iii. 17); for “if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”—*Reprinted.*

“YE ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH.”

SALT in Scripture is the symbol of incorruptness. “Every oblation of thy meat offering thou shalt season with salt . . . with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.” (Lev. ii. 13.) It betokened that sincerity which must mingle with the worship and service of the Most High, without which no sacrifice, no oblation, costly as it might be and excellent in the sight of men, could be acceptable unto Him whose eyes behold, whose eyelids try, the children of men.

It had other meanings too, all wrapped up, however, in this primary one. “It is a covenant of salt for ever before the Lord.” (Num. xviii. 10.) “The Lord God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, even to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt.” (2 Chron. xiii. 5.) Here incorruptness assumes the form of perpetuity. It was an enduring covenant.

This portion of the subject we will not now pursue, but let us turn to the words that head this paper, few and yet so full of significance as they are, and try, with God’s blessing, to take home some of the lessons they contain.

“Ye are the salt of the earth.” On whom is this honour, and, at the same time, this weighty responsibility laid? On the disciples of Jesus; on all His believing ones, wherever and however situated. “Ye are the salt of the earth” as a whole, and, as separate individuals, like the particles which go to make up the mass, scattered here and there throughout the world.

It is well to bear in mind this latter truth, to realize to the full its practical bearing, strikingly illustrated as

it is by the symbolic substance. There is such a tendency in human nature (do we not all feel it painfully again and again?) to throw off responsibility upon others, to seek to merge our duties in those of the Church as a whole.

How often we speak of Christians as a body, and virtually pass over the fact that that body is composed of units; and that, whatever the duty or testimony in question may be, that one small unit called "I myself" has his or her distinct, unmistakable part to perform, doing, suffering, possibly only sympathizing. But be the case what it may, failing such faithful performance, there will be in God's sight a want of completeness, whether man sees it or not.

Let us look first at the Christian as salt in its twofold character of incorruptness in itself, and as a counteracting agent to corruption. Above, on every side, beneath, round every minute particle of salt extends a sphere which is only stayed from corruption by this trifling atom.

So with the Christian. No matter what his position may be, no matter how humble his calling, how few those over whom he is conscious of exerting an influence, he is the centre of a sphere, to which he is or ought to be a particle of salt. He should be a standing rebuke to the evils around him—"Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Rom. xii. 2.) A steady testimony for his Lord—"Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." (1 Peter ii. 12.) A point of love, and prayer, and earnest effort for the advancement of Christ's kingdom. In a word, a living manifestation of the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of Romans, in that strength which Christ alone can give.

Let us then ask ourselves before passing on to the other portions of the subject, Am I really a particle of salt to my family, my friends, my neighbourhood? Do I exert a wholesome influence on those with whom I come in contact? Do evil speaking, evil acting, evil thinking grow less and vanish where I am, or do they flourish unchecked? Does my example strengthen waverers to come out boldly on the Lord's side, or does it cast a stumbling-block and an occasion to fall in my brother's way? Close, searching questions these, needing truthful answers—and some, we may be sure, very humbling ones.

Turning to another marked characteristic of salt, we find a striking lesson for the Christian. How readily its presence is detected in any substance with which it is mingled! how small a quantity will pervade and give its own unmistakable flavour! There is no concealment, no uncertainty about it, but a frank, unhesitating avowal of its nature and its whereabouts. “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. v. 14, 16.)

What need there is for this clear, unhesitating testimony-bearing on the part of Christians. Do we not often feel sadly tempted to hide our real character, to become tasteless at least, even if we do not assume some other flavour, rather than stand out distinct and unlike all our fellows?

It is no easy, no pleasant post to the flesh, to be the one grain of salt in a company, in a business establishment, in a family circle; to keep our savour pure and unmingled in itself, and yet never to take refuge in corners, as it were, out of the way of detection and remark. And yet how much we miss of blessing to ourselves, how many opportunities of helping others, by our lack of faithfulness in this matter. “Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your

body, and in your spirit which are God's." (1 Cor. vi. 20.)

"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." (Col. iv. 6.) "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." (Eph. iv. 29.)

Here is another aspect of salt. How forcibly it brings to mind the words of our Lord, "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." (Matt xv. 11.)

If our speech were always seasoned with salt, with "the wisdom that is from above," there would be none of those "corrupt communications" which we are so grievously prone to, which that world of iniquity, the tongue, will send forth in moments of thoughtlessness, when the Christian is off the watch—send forth never, never, to be recalled, and only too often, alas, to do irreparable mischief—idle words, gossiping words, censorious words, words prompted by envy, petty-mindedness, want of charity. If all these were put away from us, and if the stream that issued from our lips were a pure and wholesome one, incorruptible in itself, and so seasoned with the salt of the love of Christ as to be a blessing to the hearers, how happy would it be!

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Eph. iv. 31, 32.) "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." (Col.

iii. 16, 17.) What a watchword this last verse is to us. “*Whatsoever* ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

So far we have followed the thoughts suggested by the words, “Ye are the salt of the earth.” Before closing let us for a few moments dwell on the remaining portion. “But if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.”

Speaking of the salt in the land of Judæa, a traveller says, “I broke a piece of it, of which that part that was exposed to the rain, sun, and air, though it had the sparks and particles of salt, yet it had perfectly lost its savour. The inner part, which was connected with the rock (protected from the rain and sun), retained its saltness, as I found by proof.” The substance, thus worthless so far as its original intention is concerned, is often spread on paths as we use gravel.

What a picture we have here of failure in Christian walk and testimony. A Christian at heart, still salt, but so far as the world is concerned, worthless—without power or savour. The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, no matter how or by what means, so long as Satan’s end is obtained, have done their baneful work, and the result is—that saddest of spectacles—a useless Christian, the ever-ready occasion for scoffing from the enemies of the truth, and a constant trial to the sincere-hearted disciple.

What else can the savourless salt look for, so far as its position in this world is concerned, but to be trodden under foot, undistinguished even in outward appearance in the highways of the earth, losing the high privileges pertaining to faithful testimony-bearing down here; missing hereafter, not eternal life it is true (that is laid up within the veil, whither the fore-runner is for us entered, even Jesus), but, it may be, the “Well done, good and faithful servant?”

“Ye are the salt of the earth.” Ah! when these words press on us in all their reality, and our feeble hearts shrink before them, let us remember Paul’s brief summing up of the secret of all Christian power and service, and go forward with fresh courage—“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.”

JESUS HIMSELF.

THE blood, the blood, the blood!
 It is my *only* plea;
 And Jesus, risen, glorified,
 Now lives above for me.

Himself the Father’s gift,
 Himself the sinner’s Friend,
 Himself the peace, the joy,
 That ne’er shall have an end.

Jesus *my* portion is;
 The Son to me is given;
 Jesus Himself leads *all* the way,
 Until I rest in heaven.

O Father, God of love,
 In Thine own arm embraced,
 To Thy sweet home above,
 May I with Jesus haste.

With Him, oh may I work,
 Share with Him ev’ry care;
 Still dwelling in His light,
 With sweet untiring prayer.

In Him, oh may I live,
 With Him close, heart to heart;
 Then when life here is done,
 From Him I ne’er shall part.

ASKING AND RECEIVING.

“EVERY ONE that asketh, receiveth.” An absolute statement of the truth. “EVERY ONE.” In the day when the secrets of all hearts will be revealed, no failure will be found in a single case. As helps now to apprehend this—in a day when all Christians may be said to be in some sort “seeking,” and few “finding” the only blessing, which is Christ Himself,—two points may be noticed.

First, it is no casual, indifferent, heartless, intermittent “asking,” “seeking,” “knocking,” that is referred to here. It is to be the character impressed on the believer’s soul, the habit of his spirit: he must be *habitually* this, one who can be rightly described as the asker, the seeker, the knocking one; the one who ever and continually seeks, and asks, and knocks, who lives this life, whose law of inner life it is, who never ceases from it, but is always sustained in it by that living faith, the gift of God, which sees Him who is invisible, and knows assuredly, whatever appearances may be, and however long the discipline may be to “wait,” that “He is the rewarder of them that diligently *seek* Him,”—of those that “seek Him out,” or seek Him fully and to the end.

Secondly, as these are the words of Him who is the Truth, they must be read in the light of that infinite Truth which uttered them. Under that clear glance, which is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, all that which now asks and receives not, seeks and finds not, knocks and is never opened to, is seen to be not an asking, or a seeking, or a knocking, but only an imitation of these, which, having no other source, and foundation, and strength, than the carnal mind, cannot reach unto, or apprehend, or obtain anything which is of God. The answer of blessing is from

Him alone, and upon Him must His child, who would receive anything, wait for the faith, answerable to the provided blessing, which never faints, because it stands in the power of God. The spirit of the seeker equally with the finding is from Him. One equally with the other is utterly beyond the power of man. Both are always given according to His sovereign will by the God of all grace to the patient, emptied, contrite, trembling soul.

THE CHURCH OF SARDIS.

REVELATION iii. 1-6.

PART I.

THE wisdom and grace of our blessed Lord beautifully shine out in His address to the church of Sardis. Carnal pretence, and an affectation of godliness, had so completely submerged that church, that the Lord in very faithfulness was obliged to say to them, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."

A sad state surely. Profession without reality; leaves without fruit; like the barren fig tree, of which it was said—"Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?"

But no; He will dig about it, and dung it. There was some feeble life remaining; some little reality amidst the mass of pretence; some few who were seeking to please Him; and far be it from Him to destroy the righteous with the wicked. On these few well-nigh blighted ones His eye rests, and in the riches of His grace He seeks to revive, and strengthen, and cheer them. He takes forth the precious from the vile. His eye discerns every precious thing, and poor and feeble as their fruit may be, He will not slight, or pass it by unnoticed.

Many also of His own beloved ones seem to have drank of the deadly draught of a mere show of godliness, and thus had become like unto those who had

been long dead. Their souls were so trodden down and withered, that no eye but *His* could discern the feeble workings of life which remained.

Still they were *His* own—*His* loved and ransomed ones—bought with *His* own life's blood, predestinated and chosen to share *His* glory, and be *His* eternal companions and friends. They must not be cast off nor forgotten. They must not be neglected nor left to themselves. He loves them too well for that. *His* heart yearns over them. *His* compassions are stirred: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? . . . How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together."

Such is *His* grace. Such are the breathings of *His* love; and as the good and great Physician, He draws near to them to consider their need, and to give them the suited medicine. Oh, what amazing depths of mercy! Such rebels, such ungrateful wretches as we are, who continually prove ourselves unworthy of the least of all *His* mercies, and yet loved with such a love, and dealt with in such munificent grace! Well may we sing—

"What wondrous cause could move thy heart,
To take on Thee my curse and smart,
Well knowing I should ever be
So cold, so negligent, of Thee?"

The Lord Jesus presents Himself to this church of Sardis as the One "that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars." He would remind them that all fulness was treasured up in Him for them. They were not straitened in Him. The seven-fold (perfect) power of the Spirit of God was *His*, ready to be wielded and exercised for them. There was no limit to the supply. They had only to open their mouths wide to Him, and He would fill them. They need not allege the power of the devil as an excuse for their miserable plight, for greater far was He who was *for* them, and *in* them,

than he who was against them. They *might* be strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, so as to become more than conquerors through Him who loved them.

Nor need they have been enfeebled by lack of varied ministry of the truth of God. The seven stars were in His hand, and He was able to make all grace abound towards them, and to enrich them in all utterance, and wisdom, and knowledge.

Their feebleness sprang from their neglect of Him, and not from any lack of supply in Him. The fountain was still full, and overflowing, but they had forsaken HIM, the fountain of living waters, and had hewed out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which could hold no water. Thus their throats had become dry and parched, and their skin withered, and their young children cried for bread, and no one gave it to them.

This sad and wretched state was entirely caused by their feeding upon the husks (in which the swine delight), instead of feasting upon the rich provision of their Father's house, and eating bread continually at His table.

"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die." Such is His counsel to the few faithful ones among them. Oh, what a word to us! How prone are we to turn away from the diseased and feeble ones, to give them up, and to let them die; to think our labour will be lost, our strength mis-spent! But listen to His words: "Be watchful," diligent, earnest, painstaking, intent upon His blessed work, living for Him, spending and being spent for those He loves.

"Strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die." Water them, nurture them, love them, care for them. Drink into the Spirit of our beloved Lord, and yearn over them, so that you cannot give them up, but *must* labour on, assured that *He* loves them, and will in the end revive and bless, and therefore our labour cannot be in vain in the Lord.

“I have not found thy works perfect before God.” And why not? Because there had been a lack of this patient, loving care for one another. “Love is the fulfilling of the law:” not love in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth: even that love which suffereth long and is kind; which beareth all things, endureth all things, hopeth all things, and never faileth. Love will sacrifice all, yea, even life itself, if in any way it can minister to those who are so precious to Christ, and its fruit will remain.

This is the sure and certain path to His approval. Thus will our works be owned and praised of Him. Let us then so labour, that we may be acceptable, well-pleasing unto Him; satisfied, if needs be, with small results while here below, but intent on being welcomed home with those cheering, gladdening words from the lips of Christ Himself—“Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

“Before God.” The word to Abraham was, “Walk before me, and be thou perfect;” and it is only as we seek to walk before God, and remember that His eye is always upon us, desiring to approve and bless us increasingly, that we shall have strength to go steadily onwards, and not be turned aside by the difficulties which beset us.

“Remember therefore how thou hast heard and received, and hold fast and repent.” What a tender and yet faithful reproof! The Lord Jesus would recall the soul to its first knowledge of Himself, when the truth was not only heard, but *received* into the heart, and brought forth its own proper fruit. He would remind them of their former joy, and thankfulness, and love.

“What peaceful hours they once enjoyed!”

Where is this gladness now? What has destroyed it all? And whence those weary, aching hearts?

He does not upbraid, but speaks to the affections and to the memory. “Remember,” and let conscience

fulfil her appointed office, and tell perhaps of secret sins, as well as of negligence of Him.

“Hold fast, and repent.” The weary soul is ready to declare that there is no hope, that it has sunk too low, and can never rise again. “Hold fast,” says the Lord; “hold fast, and repent.” There is hope for us in Him. The wound may be incurable, but *He* has healing medicines. The bruise may be grievous, but He can bring us health and cure. “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.”

“Repent.” Not merely mourn and weep about the past, but change your minds, and rise in the strength and power of the Lord, and resolvè with purpose of heart to return to the old paths of obedience and love in which the soul once walked when first it knew the Lord.

“If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come upon thee as a thief.” Here comes a threat, a word of solemn warning, needed, may be, by some who had sunk so low that love and entreaty would not avail. Words also of fearful import to those who are mere professors of the truth, and have only a name to live, while they are actually dead. He “*will come*,” and such *must* be shut out at His coming. Upon such He will indeed come as a thief, blighting their every hope, and blasting and withering them with the brightness of His glory. His coming (which is the bright and joyous hope of those who know Him) can only bring terror, and sudden, yea, utter destruction upon the poor deceived souls who hope it is all right with them, while they are still fast held in Satan’s chains. May these solemn words of Christ arouse any such, who may read these pages.

The Lord seeks to woo us with His love and goodness. He holds out to us exceeding great and precious

promises, most choice and pleasant blessings, and thus He seeks to draw us from the paths of sin and folly, and induce us to walk in His paths of peace and holiness. But if His goodness be despised, if the soul will not yield to His entreaties, it *must* reap the bitter fruits of sin; and solemnly and earnestly does the Lord warn, yea, threaten such, if by any means He may preserve them from the evil which they are rushing into.

“I will come upon thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.” “But,” may it be said of us as of the Thessalonians, “ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.” True, we know not the day nor the hour when He will come; but He, our own beloved and longed-for Lord, will not come as a thief to us. Where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also; and if our treasure be above, we must be longing for His coming.

He may, He will come suddenly; but what a welcome coming it will be! He comes on wings of love to bear us to Himself, to lead us into all the untold joy and glory of His heavenly home, to make us drink of the river of His pleasures, and there reveal to us the heights and depths of His love immense, immeasurable. He! He Himself is ours! our chiefest treasure, our royal diadem, our crown of glory; and with Himself He gives us all He has.

But is our treasure upon earth? Are our affections fixed on things below? Do we desire and seek a portion or position here? Are our hearts set upon earthly honour, upon a fair show in the flesh, upon a name among men, upon riches which perish in the using, upon the glory of this world?

To *such* He will come as a thief, taking from them all their fancied treasure, showing them that they have misspent their energies and time, wasted, yea, lost their lives, and lived, and toiled, and groaned for vanity of vanities, and vexation of spirit.

The Lord enable us to live for eternity, to walk in the light of His coming, ready at any moment to hail His coming with delight, and to welcome Him with shouts of joy.

How long, O heavenly Bridegroom!

How long wilt Thou delay?

And yet how few are grieving

That Thou dost absent stay.

Thy very Bride her portion

And calling hath forgot,

And seeks for ease and glory

Where Thou, her Lord, art not.

O wake Thy slumb'ring virgins,

Send forth the solemn cry,

Let all Thy saints repeat it,

"The Bridegroom draweth nigh."

May all our lamps be burning,

Our loins well girded be,

Each longing heart preparing

With joy Thy face to see.

THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT.

"THE flesh lusteth against the Spirit." (Gal. v.) Hear the old man's outspoken utterance in 2 Chron. xviii. 7: "*I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil.*" This is a simple expression of the unchanging truth. That *in* us (as well as without), which is born after the flesh, *must* persecute that which is born after the Spirit. This is its instinct—the law of its life. There can be no concord between them. The one or the other must perish; the one or the other must have the victory, and this comes only through the death of its antagonist.

And so all that is of God is necessarily hateful to the natural man in the believer; for the indwelling Spirit of God strikes at the very life of this natural man, and nothing less. Here is the crucifixion; and the flesh which is to be crucified, whether in its will, or desires, or refinements, or affections, or emotions, or intelligence and culture, resists and opposes to all

extremities that which aims at its destruction. It is a war of life or death; and the imminence of the peril working on the instinct of self-preservation gives to it, if the Spirit ceases not from the conflict, the energy of despair. They that are in the flesh, therefore, cannot please God. That which is delivered over to crucifixion can never consent to its own annihilation.

That which is of the Spirit in the child of God it is that joys in God, in all His ways, and purposes, and works. To this in each one of us, so far as we have it, the crucifixion of the old man, with all his affections and desires—the desire of the flesh, and the desire of the eye, and the pride of life—is most blessed and acceptable; for it is the crucifixion of its enemy, and of the enemy of the God with whom it is one. This it is—the new creating, the spiritual birth—that takes pleasure in trials, that glories in weakness, that joys in straits and sufferings, because by these things it lives, and grows, and advances towards the stature of Christ; while that which suffers, and is brought low, and mortified through this heavenly discipline, is only that which it, in its oneness and fellowship with Him who is the Author of it, has given over to be put to death, and buried out of sight.

THE MOUNT OF GOD;

OR, THE HIGHER LIFE.

Moses had been feeding Jethro's flocks, and came to the back of the desert to the mount of God. There he sees the burning bush, and hears the voice of the I AM out of the flame; and henceforth "Horeb," or the mount of "desolation," becomes "Sinai," or the mount of the "bush" of Jehovah—the place of record of the mystery of the grace of God, as seen in the bush on fire, and yet not consumed.

There he receives his commission, and, after his

reluctance is overcome by the kindling of the anger of the Lord against him (Exodus iv. 14), he goes back to Egypt with this promise—"Ye shall serve God upon this mountain." (Exodus iii. 12.)

Months had passed; God had brought Israel out of Egypt; and now He leads them "into the wilderness of Sinai," and they encamp "before the mount." (Exodus xix. 1.) From Sinai the law is given, and God's covenant with Israel is ratified by "the blood" with which Moses sprinkled "both the book, and all the people." (Heb. ix. 19.)

This took place in the third month, corresponding with the subsequent feast of Pentecost. It is to us the witness of the new covenant in the blood of Christ, sealed by the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. And henceforth, instead of the law written and engraven on stones, a new law is written on our hearts—the law of a new life in resurrection with a risen Christ, seated at God's right hand.

The mount of God then becomes the symbol of a higher life, into which God would lead those who desire to walk in it; and to this beautifully corresponds God's most gracious message sent to Israel as recorded in Exodus xix. 3-6: "Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation."

The eagle wings of omnipotent love had brought the people unto God, "unto MYSELF," as God says, and now, in the place where He had revealed Himself in the burning bush to Moses, He greets His people with these words of gracious welcome, which declare the purpose of the unfailing God regarding them.

They were to be, and they yet shall be, "a peculiar treasure," "a kingdom of priests," and "a holy nation." To this give all the prophets witness. (Read Isa lx. lxi. and lxii.) This is the Pentecostal blessing; but God has first to show that man in the flesh, unregenerate, can never take up this blessing. It is too high, too holy, too separating in its character, pointing to a walk and a life that sinful man can never attain unto.

This Israel proved when they removed and stood *afar off*, and said to Moses, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak to us lest we die." But when Israel went *afar off*, it is said "Moses *drew near* unto the thick darkness where God was."

Thus it was that Moses entered on the higher life, and realized for himself that high and holy priestly fellowship with God for which the people were so unprepared. Thus he became unlike other men, to whom the Lord could only speak in a vision or in a dream; as God says, "My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all my house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold." (Num. xii. 7, 8.)

It was not the far off communion of the vision and the dream, but the near fellowship of mouth to mouth intercourse, that this man of God enjoyed; and it is precisely this, into which the outpouring of the Spirit has introduced us in the privilege of our high calling in Christ Jesus, and into the actual realization of which we have to *give diligence to enter*, as into that rest which remaineth for the people of God; for where is rest but in the presence of God?

There is a great difference between the top and the bottom of the mount of God. Israel was at the bottom of the mount, and "saw the thunders and the lightnings, and heard the noise of the trumpet, and saw the mountain smoking;" and while he was with

Israel at the foot of the mount, even Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake."

But for him who was to be the type of our Mediator and Intercessor (in whom we stand perfect before God) there was something else in store—he was to exchange the bottom of the mount for the top, where fear and trembling give place to confidence and trust, and the sight of the works, to the knowledge of the ways of God. He "showed His *ways* unto Moses, and His *acts* to the children of Israel."

This ever characterizes the higher Christian life of those who have learnt what mountain-top fellowship with God is. The record of Moses' sojourn there may be helpful to some who pant after this higher fellowship of unbroken intercourse with God above the mists, the clouds, the smoke, the thunders, that meet the eye and appal the ears of those content to dwell below.

All communion with God is the result of a revelation *from God* to the soul. "The Lord called Moses to the top of the mount, and he went up." (Exodus xx. 20.) It is very important that we should realize our absolute dependence on God for the revelation we seek, which He must give, and for the glory of His presence, into which He must call.

It might appear as if this militated against such expressions as "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near." We have confidence of access, because we are accepted in the Beloved; but still the living mouth-to-mouth intercourse may be wanting unless the "true heart," the "full assurance of faith," the "hearts sprinkled," and the "bodies washed," be there, and then the revelation is an act of grace which God wishes us to be mindful of.

God may see it needful to keep the waiting one waiting still, so as to hunger and thirst still more, after that which *He delights to give*, when we are *delighted to*

receive. He suffers us to hunger, that we may know what practically the hungry soul alone knows, that God alone can feed; and He alone can give the dew of His presence to satisfy and to refresh the thirsty soul.

It is interesting to notice how frequently Moses' drawing nigh to God is mentioned. In chap. xx. 21 it is again said, "And Moses drew near into the thick darkness where God was." This may lead us to ask ourselves the question, Are we prepared to go into the darkness if God be there? This is a solemn question, to which too readily the unthinking heart may reply in the affirmative, as those to whom our Lord asked a similar question, saying, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" And they replied; "We are able." Our thoughtless hearts little know what we say.

Moses had been forty years in the wilderness, and at the end had seen the vision of God in the burning bush, and he carried the rod of God in his hand. To him God was no stranger; he had seen His power, had heard His voice, and his heart had accepted the call; "counting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt"—for he saw Him who is invisible. As a child walks into the darkness when it hears the father's voice, Moses walked up into the darkness and received the judgments and the promises as recorded in chapters xxii. and xxiii.

Chapter xxiv. opens with a further announcement from God, in which Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel are commanded to come up and "worship *afar off*," and Moses alone is "to draw near unto the Lord."

We have here another measure of nearness or of distance. Something very similar to this we see in the garden of Gethsemane, where the eight disciples are left, three are taken a little further, and then the Lord, leaving them behind, goes to meet God alone.

For every measure of nearness there must be prepara-

tion, and to this tends the visiting of God every morning, and the trying by God every moment, of which Job speaks, and all because He would "magnify" man by bringing him into fellowship with Himself, because He has "set His heart upon him." (Read Job vii. 17, 18.)

Again it is said (Ex. xxiv. 13), "And Moses went up into the mount of God," taking Joshua his minister with him, and leaving Aaron and the elders behind, "and the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel."

Here we may ask the prophet's question, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" For this Israel was unprepared; for "he who walketh righteously" can alone stand there, where the "eye shall see the King in His beauty: and behold the land that is very far off." (Isaiah xxxiii. 14-17.)

Six days Moses waited, and on the seventh day God called unto him out of the midst of the cloud, "And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights." He had been content to tarry six long days alone, awaiting his summons. Power to wait is perhaps our greatest need—to wait not in the listless uncertainty of one who knows not whether he will not wait in vain, but in the full expectancy of the call to come up within the cloud upon the top of the mount.

To Israel all was as a dark cloud or as a devouring fire. To Moses it was the brightness of God's grace and love which took away fear. While at the foot of the mount he might tremble greatly; at the top, all is confidence and holy boldness, and he can talk to God as God talks to him.

During those forty days of intercourse with God he

received the commands relative to the construction of the tabernacle, and saw the pattern of things in the heavens. The work is done, the tables of the covenant written with the finger of God are put into his hand, and then in chap. xxxii. comes the awful disclosure which God makes to Moses of Israel's apostasy, saying, "I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation."

But Moses could not let God alone; he had got into the inner secret of God's counsel; and words and appearances did not discourage. His faith rose to the emergency, self was forgotten even when *he* might have occupied Israel's place, the honour of his God was uppermost, and Israel and Moses were alike nothing, when he could appeal to the oath of the living God who had sworn by His own self.

At once God accepts the appeal, and repents of the evil. But while Moses is fervent with God for Israel on the top of the mount, no sooner does he come down than he is equally fervent for God with Israel; and taking the execution of God's judgments into his own hands, three thousand slain bear witness to Israel that God is a holy God who cannot look upon sin.

Again we find Moses returning to God (chap. xxxii. 31); and while confessing Israel's sin, he offers himself to be blotted out of God's book as an expiation, if necessary, for the sin of His people. Oh, the self-sacrificing love that fills the soul of one who is really walking in his high places with God! Moses can say with Paul, "I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my kinsmen, my brethren according to the flesh." Moses had drank into the spirit of the holy ordinances of the sanctuary which had been passing before his mind and eye, and knowing with whom he had to do, he could come with all boldness; and he prevailed as Jacob did when the angel wrestled with him.

The scene now changes. Moses has been on the mount with God, and now God comes down to Moses, into the tent which he had pitched outside the camp. The cloudy pillar descends and stands at the door of the tent (not tabernacle), and God "spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." It seems to recall the confidence of Eden. Every circumstance in the path of obedience faith can hold as a claim for some further revelation, for some greater nearness—for God draws as near as His people are prepared to receive Him.

Now begins that bold laying hold of God which particularly marks Moses' intercourse at this time. Israel's sin had led Moses so into sympathy with God that the intimacy deepens, and Moses now prays, "Make me to know thy way, that I may know thee."

The knowledge of God's way is the knowledge of God Himself, and is the privilege of those who get into the secret of God. Israel never got beyond the knowledge of God's acts, and hence they were never able to rise above the providences of their path, and they judged of God by His doings, while faith ever judges of God's acts by Himself. "He is good," says the child of faith, and therefore "He doeth good," let His acts be what they may; and such can say with the Shunamite mother, "It is well," even though the child be dead.

Moses wanted to know who was going with them, and God answers, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Moses has got the answer to this petition, and now he advances further, and says (*v.* 18.), "I beseech thee, cause me to see (*Heb.*) thy glory." He wants to see the glory, that is, to see Him who was the centre of all the glory, which, in its outside radiance, had encircled the top of the mount, as seen by Israel.

There is glory within glory, as there were wheels within wheels in the vision of the glory of the Lord

seen by Fzekiel, and this inner glory of the Deity Moses asked to see, and God promises him to see as much as mortal man can see and live. Nothing is withholden; God had known Moses by name, as we read, *v.* 12, and now the name of the Lord is to be proclaimed before him, and all God's goodness is to pass by. To secure the servant from danger in the passing of the glory before him, he is put in the cleft of the Rock, and there receives that divine revelation which has since been the sheet anchor of faith to the people of God, and to which appeal has been ever made when sin or sorrow have darkened their path.

Again is Moses called up into the mount with the two tables that he had hewn like unto the first (chap. xxxiv. 1, 2), and now the Lord descends and stands with him there, and proclaims the name of the Lord before Him. It is written, "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation."

At this Moses bows and worships, and in the full confidence of the Name just proclaimed, he prays, "Pardon our iniquity and our sin." His prayer is accepted, and, with words of warning to Israel, God renews His covenant. Moses was again with the Lord forty days and forty nights, and "neither did eat bread nor drink water."

It is now that we read that his face shone. On his second sojourn on the holy mount he was brought into a measure of face-to-face communion with God, which was not the case on the first. He had come nearer, and the glory had left its radiance upon him, but he wist it not.

This is ever the spiritual result of close communion

with God; but it is not a little that will make the face to shine, and the fading glory on the face of Moses is a witness that the shining will last only so long as the intercourse is kept up.

How instructive is this episode in the history of Moses. What a lesson it teaches us to seek to rise from the place at the bottom of the mount, where all is fear, and terror, and darkness, into the calm glory of the top of the mount, where, when the cloud is passed through, all is glory and all is peace. We often fear as we enter into the cloud. Providences of God, as we look at them from beneath, are dark and mysterious; but no sooner do we enter into them in faith and in trust than we seem to have left all the darkness behind, and gained the heights in God's presence where all is joy and communion.

But there are even there, heights and depths of yet higher and deeper experience to which the soul attains, when like Moses, we are not only prepared for the summons and obedient to it, but able to abide in it till the very glory is reflected in us, and we are transformed into it from glory to glory.

The latter part of the prophecy of Habakkuk points to this, when the child of God, satisfied with God, though all fail and be cut off, is enabled still to "rejoice in the Lord," and to "joy in the God of his salvation." Then is the Lord God his strength, and he will be able to lay hold of the promise:—"He will make *my feet* like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon *mine high places*."

This is the higher walk to which the higher life leads, and of which in the triumph of faith the believer can say, "My high places." The Lord give us hearts and feet to walk there.

"Lead on, Almighty Lord!
Lead on to victory!
Encouraged by the bright reward,
With joy to follow Thee."

THE DENYING OF SELF.

“IF any man will come after me, let him *deny himself*.” (Luke ix. 23.) In this is hidden the law of the soul’s growth, specially in these deceitful, perilous days. The inner man prospers only as the old man is being destroyed.

In days of persecution this blessed work has been carried on from without in large measure, where there has been only faithful endurance of that which daily had to be endured. Now, when persecution has ceased, when an unholy alliance has been formed on all sides between the Church and the world, between the Spirit and the flesh in God’s child, denial of self is the appointed mode by which that discipline may be supplied—not for the present seeming joyous but grievous—which persecution, actual fiery trials, the fire, the sword, scourgings, torturings, stonings, bonds, imprisonments, deserts, mountains, dens and caves of the earth, wrought out to their unutterable blessing in the days that are past in those of whom the world was not worthy. Those were not “*perilous*” times as these are. They were days of destruction to all that was not of God in His child, but by this the life of God within them was not endangered, but guarded, preserved, sustained, and strengthened, and believing men and women were made to be real, and true, and detached from earth, burning and shining lights in this dark world. Now when these fierce assaults from without no longer come to the help of the child of God to try him, to purify him, and to take away his dross, to keep him unspotted from the world which crucified, and ever would crucify his LORD, to keep him equipped and thoroughly furnished, as a good and faithful soldier, enduring hardness and fighting the good fight against the world, the flesh, and the enemy of his soul, the deeply

needed deliverance, and training, and preservation, and blessing, must be promoted by self-inflicted discipline.

“Let him deny himself.” This is still the Saviour’s one word to those who would follow Him. We cannot make persecutions for ourselves, or if we did, blessing would not thus be worked by the ways of our own wilfulness. The LORD’S own provision—alas, how overlooked—for these days and for all days, is here to be read by the outward eye of all, and in varying measure to be known inwardly by one here and there, as the Spirit of God truly reigns within. “Deny thyself: take up thy cross.”

Has self yet been seen by thee, who readest this in the light of God’s presence, to be the chiefest of thine enemies? Hast thou, in the apprehension of this terrible truth, as God has revealed it to thee, really and in earnest, set it down that all the ways, and doings, and tendencies, and impulses, and willings, and suggestings of this self, in its most specious, refined, moral, and religious manifestations are but evil continually? Hast thou sincerely entered on the solemn business, important above all others, of watching for these moment by moment as they move and come forth, and then bringing them to the light, and putting them to death? Is thy day spent in pleasing self—righteous, amiable, and beautiful as it may make itself in the child of God to appear—or in crucifying it? Each moment dost thou ask, standing before God, whether the thought or the desire to which that moment gives birth is from God, or from thine own self, which is thine enemy and His? What, dear redeemed one, is the law of thy hourly life, that by which thou art conscious that thou walkest, self-denial, or self-serving, a withstanding of all that self suggests and chooses, or a following of these things to the denial of Him who has purchased thee to be His, and not thine own? Be not deceived. Be not ignorant of Satan’s devices. Rest not in any knowledge or profession of truth, in

any outward zeal, or doings, or ordinances. The work of Christ is an inward work. The fountain must be made pure, before any stream can issue from it to give joy to Him. It is not he that heareth, or approveth, or preacheth to others Christ's words that is approved, but he that "doeth them." It is not he that has "*prophesied in His name, and in His name cast out devils, and in His name done many wonderful works,*" that will be accepted, but "he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." No outward works of the present busy days can go beyond the things here stated, but habitually to *deny ourselves* is infinitely beyond them all.

Beloved readers, very precious each of you to the God of all grace, he who writes this judges it to be a word truly in season, a word greatly needed in these days of lip service, of outward activity, of imitation and of unreal profession. He believes it to be a word needed by each one of us, and by those specially who may be moved by the self which still rules within, to dissent from, or to dislike, or to despise it.

"He that rejecteth ME, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: *the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*" Dear brethren, is this true? Has the LORD said it? And what is the word that HE has spoken to us? "He said to them ALL, If any man is willing to come after ME, let him DENY HIMSELF, and take up HIS CROSS, and FOLLOW ME."

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

EACH detail of the sufferings of the Lamb of God opens to our souls a fresh stream of the fulness of that mercy which endureth for ever. The sufferings and the glories of the Lamb are the all-engrossing subjects in heaven, the substance of the testimony of the prophets on earth, and the continual ministry of the Holy Ghost to the church now.

When we meditate on the wounds, bruises, and sorrows of Jesus in connection with our sins; when we see that we could be healed in no other way than by such stripes, and that it was our transgressions that caused Him such immeasurable agony, surely sin becomes exceeding hateful to us, while we adoringly own and magnify the wonders of redeeming love.

The same lesson teaches us that the holy sin-hating God, is also a gracious sin-pardoning God. Neither sin, the world, nor Satan, look so black anywhere else, as at the crucifixion of Christ, the only fountain of life, and light, and love, and peace.

Look at Him in the garden of Gethsemane! See Him in that solemn hour, when bathed in agony and blood, He cried, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Watch with Him there awhile, and mark the bitter conflict of His soul, as He looked onwards to the fearful wrath He had to bear. Then see Him rise, collected, calm, resolved to go through *all* that He might win us for Himself.

Listen again, and hear Him say, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" He had measured its depths, but still He shrank not back; He had tasted its bitterness, but would not put it from Him.

Oh, what precious lessons of divine grace are here set before us! We can only look on, and worship.

Jesus was drawing very near the cross. The great testimony of all the prophets was about to be accomplished. The Son of the Highest was about to enter into the lowest depths of humiliation. And eternal victory was to be achieved, and captivity itself led captive. The gate of heaven was to be thrown open by the bleeding hands of the Son of God. The Lord of glory was drawing near to the shameful tree, there to give His life a sacrifice for sin; and as He delivered Himself into His murderer's hands, He says, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

He thus reminds us of the Father's love. The Father chose us in Christ, and gave us to Christ, before the foundation of the world. The Father sent forth His Son to redeem His people. The Father gave commandment to Jesus what He should say, and what He should speak. The Father was always with Him; and now the Father presents to Him the bitter cup to drink, that *we* might not drink it, but be brought into blessed and unchanging nearness to Himself.

Well might the apostle John exclaim, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" We had no claim whatever upon God. We were by nature dead in sins, whilst practically we were only sinners and ungodly; but the Father's eternal purpose of blessing us in Christ must be carried out, and though it could only be accomplished by the bloodshedding of His beloved Son, yet He spared not even Him. He gave Him the cup of woe to drink. He laid upon Him our iniquities, and bruised Him; and

*"He bowed His willing head,
He drank the bitter gall."*

The Lord Jesus knew that the eternal welfare of unnumbered multitudes was connected with His drinking that cup, as well as the glory of the Father of mercies; and however deep and bitter the cup might be, the intensity of Christ's love knew no reluctance—"Shall I not drink it?" What breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of love are here! What unsearchable riches! What abounding grace! When He knew that the time was near that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.

*"His love to the utmost was tried,
But immovable stood as a rock."*

Long had He anticipated the drinking of that dreadful draught, and now the moment was at hand. He had repeatedly said to His disciples, "The Son of man

must suffer many things, and be rejected of the chief priests, and scribes, and be slain, and be raised again the third day ;” and though He “knew all things that should come upon Him,” He willingly went forth. “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it.”

“O love divine ! what hast Thou done ?
 The Son of God, His blood hath shed,
 The Father’s co-eternal Son
 Had all our sins upon Him laid ;
 The Son of God for us hath died,
 Our Lord, our life, was crucified.”

But what was the cup ? Who can tell, but He who mixed, and He who drank it ? What angel or seraph can tell the contents or measure the depths of that cup ? No mortal mind can grasp its infinite realities. The most spiritual saint knows but little about it.

There is, however, much instruction in the Scriptures on the subject ; and sure we are that it was connected with the deepest and most unutterable anguish and sorrow to Him who drank it, and called forth from His pure and holy soul such bitter cries as, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?” “I sink in deep mire where there is no standing. I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. I am weary of my crying, my throat is dried ; mine eyes fail while I wait for my God . . . Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour ; mine adversaries are all before Thee. Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness.” “Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts ; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.” “My soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave . . . Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps . . . I am shut up ; I cannot come forth . . . thy fierce wrath goeth over me, and thy terrors have cut me off.”

Our consciences acknowledge that *our* sins caused that cup to be mixed and drank, while we recognize

in Him our Surety, our Substitute; One standing in our room and stead; One made sin and a curse for us; One bearing our sins, and suffering all the wrath and judgment *we* merited at the holy hands of divine justice.

Neither man nor angel could drink that cup—none but JESUS. One who was equal with God alone could meet divine wrath, and satisfy divine justice. This was why Jesus exchanged His Father's bosom for this unparalleled scene of sorrow, that HE might be the Daysman to lay His hand both upon the just God and the unjust sinner, and by the willing sacrifice of Himself open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Throughout His sojourn in this wilderness the Lord Jesus had anticipated the drinking of this cup, but it appears to have been presented to Him at Gethsemane. It is there we hear Him say in the sore amazement of His spirit, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." And so terrible was His anguish, that "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground." But the cup was not drunk then. This was but a foretaste of what the agony of that cup would be; and if the foretaste was so terrible, what must the reality have been!

But now the cup has been drunk even to the dregs. The spotless Sufferer drained it to the last drop, saying, "It is finished." That bitter cup, which would have been to us an eternity of unmitigated woe, He freely drank. The sword of justice which so long cried for vengeance upon our sins was sheathed in His holy heart. Our unnumbered transgressions were laid upon Him. He answered for all our sins. The cup of fierce and righteous anger which we justly merited Jesus drank, thus accomplishing our eternal redemption, and setting us free from all condemnation, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Such was His mighty victory, and now it is *His* joy to see us drink the cup which He thus purchased for

us; a cup without a single drop of wrath, but filled with love, salvation, victory, and peace.

“Jesus took the cup (the cup of blessing), and when He had given thanks, He *gave* it to them, and they all drank of it; and He said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.” This is the cup which Jesus has left us to drink, the cup of blessing which we bless indeed, which we never could have tasted had not Jesus drunk that cup which the Father gave Him. He drank the bitter, and has left us only the sweets. He tasted death that we might live for ever. He endured the wrath and curse, that we might have all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.

We are not our own, we have been bought with a price; such an inestimable price; the precious blood of Christ; and therefore should not live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again. We should obey and glorify God because we are *His*. In the riches of His grace, He passed by us, saw us polluted in our blood, and said, “Live!” He looked upon us, spread His skirt over us, and covered our nakedness, swore unto us, entered into covenant with us, thoroughly washed us, and we became *His*.

We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. We *are* children of God, and should seek to be obedient children. We are called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ, to “walk even as He walked.” We are a “chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that we should shew forth the excellencies of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.”

We have passed from death unto life; we are made nigh to God; there is no further condemnation for us, but blessing has been, is, will, and must be our continued and eternal portion. Surely we can say, “I have a goodly heritage.” “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name!”

A PILGRIM'S SONG.

My dying bones are weary now,
 And fain would find a grave;
 My longing soul would homeward go
 To Him who lives to save.*

Enthroned in Glory, see He reigns
 In yonder sphere of Love,
 And spouseless there His heart complains,
 Till saints are crowned above.

The love that brought Him down to die,
 Still pines till they arise,
 And mourns to hear His pilgrims sigh,
 Sad exiles from the skies.

Unknown on earth, despised and few,
 They wait their Lord's return,
 With spirits bathed in heavenly dew,
 And hearts that loving burn.

A few more days, the pilgrims say—
 A few more years at most—
 His shout will rend the milky way,
 And earth behold His host!

He comes to bless the weary heart,
 The faithful saint reward:
 From tombs the dead in myriads start—
 For ever with the Lord!

Glad sight! behold His sons ascend
 To meet in ambient air
 Their Bridegroom, King, celestial Friend,
 His empire vast to share.

They mount, they mount, through depths of light,
 Beyond the seraph's ken,
 To where, in heavenly glories bright,
 God dwells alone with men!

His sons, they come, of every clime,
 From service, sad, severe!
 While, hark! the FATHER'S voice sublime
 Saith, "Welcome, loved ones, here!"

* This desire has been fulfilled.

They bow beneath the weight of bliss,
 Which angels ne'er can know,
 And give their FATHER back the kiss
 He gave their souls below.

A stream of rapture, broad and deep,
 O'erflows the hallowed place,
 Where God His revel loves to keep
 With saints who see His face.

Amid the throng the Glory-Man
 Uprears His massive brow ;
 No longer bleeding, pale, and wan,
 It beams with radiance now.

And yet a wreath of grief it bears,
 The Lamb for sinners slain—
 A crown of thorns in glory wears,
 The thorns without the pain.

But o'er that crown a thousand more,
 Whose blaze like lightning runs,
 Adorn the MAN whom saints adore,
 The Chief of all God's sons ;

Adorn the GOD who left His throne,
 And laid His glory by ;
 "Made flesh" to weep, to bleed, to groan,
 A curse on Calvary !

The FATHER'S heart, with rapture moved,
 Exults, and saith, "'Tis well !
 O JESUS, SON, my Well-beloved,
 With ME thus ever dwell."

The SON responds, "Behold, my Sire,
 The souls Thou gav'st to Me,
 In glory, saved from Tophet's fire,
 Now praise, now worship Thee.

"Eternal ages roll along,
 Eternal joy is theirs ;
 I'm Chief of all the glorious throng,
 And they my fellow-heirs."

SALVATION, SERVICE, ASSOCIATION.

THE first step in the Christian course is to be saved ; that is, forgiven and justified. This is not the goal of our race, but the starting-point—the primary qualification for *entering* the race-course. We serve and obey and seek to lead a Christian life, not in order to gain life, but as the natural outflow of the life which we have received.

There is yet to come the full enjoyment of this salvation for all who possess it. But to be made heir to an inheritance is one thing, and to enter upon the enjoyment of it is another.

After being saved, forgiven, and justified, we find in Scripture very important instruction for our earthly position. We must become servants, and then we must be associated or joined together in fellowship.

It is on these three subjects I propose to say a few words, taking as the basis of my remarks three allegorical passages in which they are respectively treated of. The first in Luke xv. 8-10, the second in 2 Tim. ii. 20, 21, the third in 1 Cor. iii. 9-12.

In each of these the precious metals are the figures chosen to convey the intended teaching—a silver coin—gold and silver vessels—gold and silver and precious stones. In each we find a "house" as the scene of the parabolic illustration, the same Spirit using in the parables of the apostle the like figures as He uttered by the lips of the Master.

The meaning of the precious metals is, doubtless, one and the same. The coin shows out the value God attaches to the mere possession of our souls ; the gold and silver vessels show value and ornament in connection with service ; while the gold and silver and precious stones in the building of God convey our highest

ideal of superlative worth, perfection, and beauty, in a permanent and glorious association.

As we proceed we shall see, that as the interpretation of the precious metals is one, so is that of the house also one, though seen under different aspects, and set out with several intent.

I. THE SILVER PIECE. (LUKE XV. 8-11.)

Observe the context, and you will not fail to discover the hidden meaning. The Shepherd seeks his lost sheep; the Father yearns for his lost son. Their joy in finding is explained to represent the joy in *heaven* over repenting sinners. The Shepherd, then, must be the blessed speaker Himself; the Father, His Father and ours. And if thus we are shown the mind of God the Father toward the sinner, and the mind of God the Son, look we in vain to find in the lost silver the mind and work of God the Spirit?

But why, then, is the figure of "a woman" selected? Because it is only in and by the Church now, as by God's people Israel formerly, that the Spirit works. And we all know that the woman is the favourite type in Scripture to represent God's people in every age. (Hosea ii.; Jer. ii.; 2 Cor. xi. 2; Rev. xix. 7; xxi. 2.) Thus as the Son and the Holy Ghost have come forth from heaven to earth to seek and save, so the shepherd and the woman are shown going forth to seek and labour till they find. This feature, omitted in the case of the father, conveys the perfect fitness of the parable to show out the divine realities.

Further. As it is by the word, the written word, the Spirit operates, so in this part of the parable the "candle" is introduced; for the word is a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path; and if men yield not under its bright rays, then the broom of threatened wrath (Isa. xiv. 23) is made use of by the Spirit (Acts xiii. 40, 41) to compel them to flee from the judgment to come. Thus we cannot fail to see in the woman,

who lighteth her candle and sweeps the room, and seeks diligently till she find her lost treasure, the action of the Church by the Spirit in winning wandering souls.

We now come to the piece of silver; and, in its plainest and primary sense, it teaches us that God esteems us precious. We are at once reminded of that other parable, of the merchant seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one of great price, sold all that he had to buy it. (Matt. xiii. 45, 46.) What that teaches touching the value of the Church this teaches of the individual soul. God in wonderful grace counts us worthy of diligent and laborious efforts, and of the expenditure of a great purchase price.

It cannot be doubted that the intention of the parables of Luke xv. is to open out God's grace in saving the lost; and yet there is this remarkable vein running through them all, that in each case the thing sought had been once in possession. In this they differ from the parable of the pearl.

They therefore have the twofold purpose of showing, first, that lost man was once in God's favour, and that salvation is our restoration to that blessing; and then, that being restored to it, if we fail as His children, the sheep of His pasture, the same grace which met and saved us at the first still operates to restore us.

Thus the silver coin bears upon its face the image and superscription of the King. While lost, the King is deprived of His own; His purpose in our creation or redemption, as the case may be, is frustrated. Afar off, defaced, bedimmed with dust of earthly things, defiled, the precious object of God's regard and love lies buried in unproductive selfishness, lifeless and powerless.

Does my wandering fellow-saint peruse these lines? Awake, awake, my brother! Remember you are not your own. Once found of Christ, He has marked you as His own, and given you the earnest of His Spirit, stamped His brand of ownership upon your soul; and

to be changed into the same image from glory to glory is His purpose, and should be your ambition. Awake! awake! I say, and the "candle of the Lord" shall give you light. Awake, and shake thyself from the dust! Let the glitter and sheen of the heavenly mint reappear upon your forefront! Let your King's image be reflected, His superscription of possession be "known and read of all men!" Render to God the things that are God's, and leave the things of Cæsar unto Cæsar!

Then shall you render Him yourself, your grateful love, your happy, cheerful praise, your higher powers of mind, and your lower ones of body. To be deformed before men by being "transformed in the renewing of your mind," and "conformed to the image of God's Son," is glory even on earth to an "heir of glory."

To the sinner in his sins the parable speaks no less plainly. "Let us make man in our own image," said Jehovah in council; and thus that day, by His image impressed, God set forth a Creator's claim to the allegiance of all who bore it. And this the modern world is ready enough to allow; for wherever the light has penetrated, men run together to the profession of Christ's name. This brings me to the scene of the woman's search. It was not in the "far country" of foul and licentious indulgence, nor yet in the "wilderness" of utter ignorance of God, nor even merely "in the field" of barren obedience to law, but it was "in the house," that is, in the very precincts of Christian profession, the house of religious observance.

We are all familiar with this illustration of God's professing people in different ages, and have therefore no difficulty in interpreting it here. It describes the present state of things as truly as that of the time in which it was spoken. All were not Israel that were of Israel. There were lost sheep in the house of Israel. All are not Christ's that are "Christian." There are lost souls in thousands within the walls of the professing Church. And here they are not so easily discovered.

Vice or dark ignorance expose the true state at once; but for souls wrapped up in a form of godliness we need the lighted candle, the swept house, the diligent search, to ensure discovery. In other words, the seekers must let their light shine, “cleanse their way,” and be in earnest.

The world is half-Christian. It even knows in a broad sense the true man from the false. Wolves and sheep, all clad alike, are mingled together—the sheep often too timid to bleat for their Shepherd, the wolves too subtle to howl against Him. In a certain sense there is no more the Church not of the world, nor the world lying in the wicked one: the world has invaded the Church, the Church has entertained and “Christened” the world, and now the confederation is named the “Visible Church.”

Therefore the saint must be “out-and-out,” as men say, for his Lord; no half-hearted service will do. If souls he would win, he must bear to be seen and known as Christ’s, body and soul. Amid the much light of universal profession he must shine out with double clearness, and declare himself by unmistakable reality. And thus even in “the house” he may be the means of recovering for God His lost treasure, and restoring to the silver coin the defaced image of its Owner.

“EARLY WILL I SEEK THEE.”

“*Early* will I seek thee” in the day of trouble. Thou biddest me cast all my care on thee. Let me then do so the very instant it comes; before it has taken such hold of my spirit that I cannot shake it off; ere I am “so troubled that I cannot *speak*” to thee.

“*Early* will I seek thee” in the hour of temptation. The traitor within is always ready to admit the evil from without, and every moment of delay only makes it more difficult to give up the command of the

citadel to the "Captain of the Lord's host," who alone can order the battle, command deliverances for His people, and make the enemy to flee before Him and them.

"*Early* will I seek thee," because "my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth." "The preparation of the heart is from the Lord." Then make haste, my soul, and delay not; catch the heavenly influence, and make the most of it, for "the heart is deceitful above all things." It will soon "turn aside like a broken bow." Let me, then, at once "press toward the mark" with all the energy God's good Spirit now gives, assured that "He is good to the soul that seeketh Him." Then, Lord, early, yes, "*early* will I seek thee." Thus saith the Lord, "They that seek me *early shall find me.*"

THE CHURCH OF SARDIS.

PART II.

THE rich grace of the Lord Jesus is very manifest in His appeals to these seven Churches of Asia. Therein we may verily *behold* "His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," both perfect, both abounding, and both exactly suited to our need—the *grace* to bear with and meet us in all our failure, and then the *truth* to instruct, exhort, reprove, rebuke, and lead us into the ways of righteousness and peace.

We may well stand amazed as we ponder on the way in which the Lord takes note of, and makes much of, any little service or obedience. He comes into His garden—the Church—seeking for pleasant fruits in which He can delight; and even where the fruit is not ripe He finds pleasure in the green figs and tender grapes.

Surely there is none so easy to please as our beloved Lord. He rejoices over every effort to do His will,

every struggle against sin or Satan, every breathing after Himself; while at the same time He is grieved by any act of disobedience, any indifference to His revealed will, or any neglect of Himself.

His love is so intense that it is a jealous love. He is jealous over us, lest any hurt us, so that he who toucheth us toucheth the apple of His eye; and He is jealous of our thoughts, our feelings, our affections, desiring to reign supreme, entirely to fill our hearts. And surely He is worthy, worthy of our love, worthy of our praise, worthy of all we are or have.

“O let Thy love constrain us
 To give our hearts to Thee;
 Let nothing henceforth pain us,
 But that which paineth Thee:
 Our joy, our one endeavour,
 Through suffering, conflict, shame,
 To serve Thee, gracious Saviour,
 And magnify Thy name.”

In the Lord's addresses to some of the previous Churches He speaks of “*a few things against them*;” but to the Church of Sardis He can only speak of a *few* persons who were pleasing Him. “A few names” only, and then He adds “even in Sardis,” as if their collective state was such that even these few names were a marvel.

And yet how tender, how gracious, how pitiful, are His words; so full of encouragement and admonition, so calculated to strengthen, so suited to revive them in their withered and dying state; verily, full of grace and truth, and manifesting what He is as our great High Priest, who has pledged Himself to present us all with exceeding joy before the throne of His glory! (Jude 24; Eph. v. 27.)

“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments”—such as had kept themselves “unspotted from the world.” The Lord Jesus “gave Himself for us, that He might deliver us from this present evil world;” not only from hell, but also

from "all iniquity." He has set us apart for Himself. He has robed us in a priestly dress, and desires to see us hating even the garment spotted with the flesh.

"They have not defiled their garments." What a blessed commendation from the Lord of life and glory! He watched them as they passed along amid the mass of evil around them. He marked them with their girded loins, threading their way with anxious, careful steps, lest they should be defiled; and He well knew how oft they sought fresh cleansing from His gracious hands, so that no spot of sin might stain those blood-washed robes.

Are we thus placed? Is evil very rife around us? Still HE is near, a present help, ready to hold us up, or, if we fall, ready to raise us up, and make us clean again.

Then comes the glorious recompense. "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." Thus shall it be done to the one whom the King delighteth to honour. "Them that honour me I will honour."

They had been careful of *His* honour. They had sought to walk worthy of Him unto all pleasing. They had walked circumspectly, keeping themselves from the evil, and striving to commend His truth in all holy conversation and godliness. They had cleansed themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. And mark the rich reward: "They shall walk with me in white." Special present fellowship undoubtedly, but special future glory also. They shall walk with Him in the realms above, and thus be owned by *Him* as those who had walked with Him below.

How great the joy of such companionship! Chosen by Christ Himself to walk with Him—*chosen* as those in whom He is well-pleased—as those whom He delights to honour. Thus, as eternal ages roll along, all present faithfulness to Him will bring continued fresh reward; and words of loving praise will thrill and fill with joy unspeakable each one who strives, during this

“little while,” to keep his garments clean, and walk with Christ in this polluted world.

“For they are worthy.” How wonderful! Our song will be—

“Worthy the Lamb for sinners slain,
Worthy alone the crown to wear!
Thou, Thou art worthy, Thou alone!”

But here the Lord Jesus, in speaking of these poor struggling saints, declares that “they are worthy.” Such is His estimate of a loving, careful, watchful walk—such is the praise He gives. Well may we “love, and sing, and wonder!” And shall we not yield ourselves afresh to Him, as those fast bound by the chains of love, and seek to do no will but His?

If some are walking carelessly, is there not more reason why *we* should walk circumspectly? If some bring reproach and shame upon His holy and blessed name, should it not stimulate *us* to strive more earnestly to be a name, a praise, and a glory to Him? And if iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold, surely, surely, we should give the more earnest heed to our ways, and strive that at least He may have a few faithful ones in whom He can delight, and of whom He may be able even now to say, “*They are worthy!*”

“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment;” not only when we pass away to be with Christ—even now those who overcome are thus arrayed. They not only stand before God in the perfection and beauty of Christ, but they also walk among men in the holy garments of obedience, humility, and love. The world can take knowledge of such, that they have been with Jesus, and the saints of God discern in them that richness and freshness of soul, which can only flow from companionship with Christ. They are clothed in white raiment *here*, and shall shine forth with peculiar lustre *hereafter*.

How encouraging also are those words!—“He that overcometh.” We may be painfully conscious that the

Lord cannot say of us, "They have not defiled their garments," but will we rise and cleanse ourselves? Are we prepared to wash our garments, to cleanse our ways with the washing of water by the word, putting away *all* that the word of God condemns? If so, we *shall overcome*, and may learn to keep our garments unspotted, and at last obtain from Him this precious testimony, "They have not defiled their garments . . . they are worthy."

"And I will not blot out his name out of the book of life." The testimony of Christ is very sure, that He gives unto His sheep eternal life; they shall never perish, and none shall pluck them out of His hand. But many whose names are reckoned among the saints on earth have no part in the book of life. They have never been washed in the blood of the Lamb, and therefore their names are not written in heaven. Such are mere professors of the truth; they have not received life from Christ; and therefore, when overcome with temptation, and entangled in worldliness or sin, they have no power to rise, but sink lower and lower, and become increasingly the slaves of sin and Satan.

"He that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved," is the thrice-repeated utterance of the Lord Jesus Himself. And again we read, "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end."

Such words are very solemn and very testing. They are the sharp two-edged sword used by the Spirit to divide between those born of God, and the mixed multitude which are mingled with them. They explain the mystery why so many run well for a season, and then turn aside unto Satan. Such are stony-ground hearers, who may have received the word with joy, but have no root in themselves, and therefore endure but for a season.

No timid, humble soul need be discouraged; for Christ will hold such fast, and keep them to the end.

They feel their need of Him; they mourn because of sin; and even though their faith be weak, their hearts still cling to Him. He is their only hope, the only refuge of their weary souls.

But those who hold the truth in unrighteousness may well beware. Such as abuse the grace of God, who give the reins to sin, and yet boast of the cleansing power of the blood of Christ, have cause to tremble. Such may well fear, lest after all they have deceived themselves; and then their names, however high in the church on earth, will not be found in the book of life.

“And I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels.” He will not only confess such when He comes in His glory, but He verily confesses such also *now* in heaven. (See Matt. x. 32; Luke xii. 8.) How wonderful this connection between earth and heaven! The Lord Jesus, seated on the throne of glory, looks down upon His precious, blood-bought people, and glories in, rejoices over, and speaks of their victories. What power this truth should give us!

The bands with which He has united us to Himself are so strong, and yet so tender, that everything we are, or do, produces an immediate echo in heaven itself. Are we obedient, loving, faithful? Jesus Himself will speak of it, and the courts of heaven resound with joy. Are we rebellious, wilful, fickle? The devil lays it to our charge (Rev. xii. 10); and while the Lord Jesus in His faithfulness, as our great High Priest (Heb. ii. 17; 1 John ii. 1), meets and silences the accuser, yet He is ashamed of our sin, and grieved by our ingratitude. How solemn the words, “Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven!” (See also Luke xii. 9.) “If we deny Him, He also will deny us.” Let us beware of thus grieving and vexing Him.

Is there any little improvement in our ways? Are we beginning to struggle against some previously in-

dulged sin? HE will be quick to notice it, and HE will own us before His Father as those who are beginning to overcome.

Beloved in the Lord, let us lay these truths to heart. Let us receive and ponder on them. Let us fix our eye above, and seek to apprehend these invisible things. Let us seek for the opened ear, to discern Christ's verdict upon our ways. Let us remember that HE is taking note of, and is deeply interested in, all we do. HE desires to have His joy fulfilled in us. HE longs to be able to praise us, to speak of us to His God and Father, and to confess us before the angels as those who are "worthy" of Him.

Let us remember this, and then it will be an easy thing to have the willing hand, and ready foot, yea, loving heart, to do *His* will.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches." Let us only *listen* and our faith will grow, and as we grasp these blessed, glorious truths, the world will lose all power to charm or draw our souls from Christ, and we shall count all things but dross compared to Him.

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

THE NEEDED TRAINING FOR ALL TRUE SERVICE FOR GOD.

WHEN Moses was forty years old he saw an Egyptian smiting an Israelite, and he slew him. He did this from a true zeal for God, and in much intelligence of God's mind. He had sufficiently entered into the thoughts of God to believe that destruction was ordained for Egypt on account of her persecution of Israel, and "he supposed," as Stephen declares, that "his brethren would have understood how that God

by his hand would deliver them." In both these respects he seems to have stood alone, far in advance of every Israelite around him. Yet, alas! with the true work of God thus manifest in him, he was acting altogether in the flesh. The death of the Egyptians and the deliverance of Israel had, indeed, been determined by God, and this could have been learned by Moses only in fellowship with God. But in all his actings here, as recorded for our admonition, the carnal mind is seen intruding itself into the things of God, and seeking to please God, instead of being given over to crucifixion, and death, and burial. And so the Spirit of God has recorded that Moses "looked this way and that way" before concluding to slay the Egyptian, and that he slew him only when "he saw that there was no man," and that he then "hid him in the sand." And the necessary issue of this well-meant, good-intentioned, but unbidden and therefore lawless, self-willed putting forth of his own strength for God, was that when next day an Israelite asked him, "Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?" he feared and said, "Surely the thing is known;" and afterwards he "fled from the face of Pharaoh."

Note that in all this we have typical instruction for *the believer*. It is not the unsaved one, but the Christian—and not the slothful Christian, who has no thought of serving God, but the earnest, hearty, energetic Christian, full of service and desirous to please God—that is here pictured for us by the Holy Spirit. It is the Christian who has much right understanding of God's will, much entering into His gracious thoughts, who, then, (as, alas! is too easy on all sides,) instead of taking the only right place of subjection to God, of waiting until he is sent, thinks that they that are in the flesh can please God, and so sets about doing that which, however excellent otherwise, he individually, by God's still small voice speaking to his soul, never

was commissioned to do.* This is a subtle delusion, a disastrous mistake; for it is a wile of the father of lies, who was a man-slayer from the beginning, to deceive and ruin God's own child, and one who desires to be up and doing, by urging him along a path of his own choosing, and blinding him into the belief that any service, however sincere, can be acceptable to God, unless commanded by Him, and carried on throughout at His immediate bidding. Herein is the secret to explain all the humiliating failure of Moses in connection with this bold and righteous deed. Had he entered upon it in the strength of God, at God's command, there would have been no "looking this way and that way," and no "hiding in the sand." God's child, acting consciously in the power of God, works with the stillness, and evenness, and majesty of omnipotence. God's child, striving to work for God uncalled, unsent, and unable each moment to identify himself truly with God working in him and through him, will surely be found to fail, and waver, and act with unseemliness when, in the day of trial, an emergency arises demanding a strength and a wisdom greater than his own.

Contrast this with the next appearance of Moses in Egypt. Another forty years had now passed over his head—for the Spirit of God has recorded that he was fourscore years old when he stood again before Pharaoh—and these forty years were spent by him as a stranger in the land of Midian, where he led a flock "to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even Horeb." We read of no attempt to do any thing here, but only that he was alone with God; that in the solitude of the desert he saw the bush that burned with fire and was not consumed; that he

* Let none mistake or misapply what is here said. The Christian is redeemed to be an obedient child; and though in special cases he needs the "still small voice" for direction, yet, as opportunity offers, he should be instant in season, out of season, preaching the word, and ready for every good work.—
EDITOR.

“trembled” in the presence of the Holy One, whom forty years before he ignorantly sought to serve; that he “durst not behold,” but heard God calling to him, “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” Who shall tell what a time of painful, blessed discipline those long and weary years must have been? Year after year passed—no shorter time sufficed to fit for such a work—until, under the Master’s patient training, this ardent man of God, who had thought that he could serve God uncrucified, honest at heart and with a right object, but uncommissioned, and walking in his own wisdom and his own strength, has learned at length, and learned in reality, the lesson of lessons—that he is nothing.

Now, when the vessel has been made meet for the Master’s use, He hastens to use it. Now Moses receives his commission from the mouth of God. “Come now therefore, and *I will send thee* unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.” God does not try any of His children desiring to serve Him by keeping them in ignorance of His mind as to what He would have them to do when the time comes for doing it. The trial is to wait, to be patient, to restrain the unruly nature, to watch against the deceitful heart. God is sure to speak with a plainness which will be unmistakable if the soul truly waits on Him. He desires nothing to be entered upon in doubt: “He that cateth” (or doeth any thing) “and doubteth is condemned.” His purpose is not our condemnation, but our blessedness; and He would, therefore, have each of His children to stand still in patience and singleness of eye, until He plainly speaks; until, by His voice, every doubt is removed. How long those who now run here and there unsent might be called to wait, we know not. But in this patient waiting, however long and trying, would be found the true training for work to be truly done to God.

All forwardness and self-sufficiency are now gone. The true sight of God has been death to these. Now the man, once so ready to act, needs all the encouragement of God to be made to take a step. "And Moses said unto God, *Who am I*, that *I* should go unto Pharaoh, and that *I* should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" And again, "They will not believe *me*, nor hearken unto *my* voice;" and again, "Behold, *I* am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh hearken unto *me*?" The forty years in the desert had done their work, and done it thoroughly, yet much remained still to be learned. The first forty years of his life launched him forth uncommanded on the path of service, with good desires, and some knowledge of God's purposes, but walking and acting in the flesh, not in the Spirit, and ignorant of the need that that flesh should die before he could serve God. The end of the second forty years finds all that was of nature nailed to the cross, reckoned as dead, so that the deep conviction now is, that he can do nothing. A further lesson should have been learned, but this remained to be taught during the last forty years of his life (for he lived yet another forty); that though he was truly able in himself to do nothing, God was his all-sufficiency, and in His power he could do all that He commanded. He needed still to learn that when we are weak, then we are strong; that God's strength is made perfect in weakness; that God chooses the truly weak things to confound the mighty; that God can fill with Himself no vessels except those that are emptied; and that that which weakens and empties us, casts us down, and keeps us unfeignedly low, is the very preparation whereby God makes us such that His power may rest on us, and His fulness be manifested in us.

Mark, now, the different result to the Egyptians. Before, in self-energy and carnal activity, Moses slew one Egyptian. But this wrought no deliverance for

Israel, and made no progress towards deliverance. It is not by such weapons that God can be served. Now God works. His time has come. His servant "*stands still,*" and "*sees the salvation of God.*" The flesh has ceased to find place to work and glory in God's presence. "The Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea—there remained not so much as one of them. Thus THE LORD saved Israel, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore." It is no longer one Egyptian slain, and there is now no hiding of the dead enemy. When God works He works effectually, and His work needs no concealment. It is the right hand of the Lord that dashes the enemy in pieces (Ex. xv. 6), and the work of Moses is but to stretch forth his hand over the sea. Thus is it learned that God alone is the Doer, and that our place is to wait for Him to do, whether directly by His own right hand, or mediately when it shall please Him by any one whom He may choose and fit.

Dost thou ask, dear child of God, whether the object of what is here written is to dissuade from service? Art thou startled at the possibility, that when on all sides the need of servants of God seems so great, any should utter even a discouraging word? The intention of the writer is not, indeed, to dissuade from any true service for God, but to call upon all who read, all specially who are taking any prominent place in that which passes for service among Christians now, to ask themselves in sincerity, in the presence of God, whether they—each one individually—have been "sent" by God, each one to the work which he is doing, as was Moses at last after his futile efforts and his discipline of years—whether each one has been "called," as was Aaron, and as was Abraham. The question, suggested in true love and meekness, is surely not a needless one, or an unimportant one, whether thou who readest, whatever may be thy work, and however long thou mayest have been working, art not acting as Moses

before he was taken away from all work, and made to stand face to face with God. The question is, whether we can answer Him to whom we must soon give account—"What I do, I do, not because I find myself impelled to do something, not in imitation of others, not because it is universally acknowledged to be a good work, not because sinners or saints plainly need some one to do it, but solely because I have put myself into the hands of God, and given myself up to Him for direction, that I might be preserved from doing anything in my own natural lawlessness; and He Himself has said to me, Do thou this service in obedience to my command, which thou hast heard, and continue in it day by day, or cease from it only as day by day thou art commanded by ME." That alone which is thus done will be hereafter found to be service acknowledged of God. In these busy, restless days, the warning held out by the failure of Moses is truly needed. God yearns to find a true servant, one like His beloved Son, one who will *speak not of himself*, one who *can do nothing of himself*, one who will do nothing and speak nothing, except of Him, and from Him, and by Him. But solemnly does He enjoin us to cease from self, from our *religious*, active, working self, which can never be a servant of Him, or work anything to the glory of His name.

The chief need of all, and specially of those whose work is seen by man, is to be brought into the presence of God, to know Him whom they desire to serve as Job did, as well as Moses, not by hearing of Him by the hearing of the ear, but by our own eye seeing Him, that we, as they, may abhor *ourselves*, and repent in dust and ashes. Let God be truly seen; let His voice be heard: "Take off thy shoes, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground;" and then, for the first time, there will be the groundwork qualification for any true service, an abiding sense of our own nothingness, of the abhorrence to God of all that is of the natural

man, of our need through the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the body, that, dying to the old, we may know experimentally the raising up of the new, and the growth of that heavenly life in which alone there is fellowship with God.

The proportion of the life of Moses which was spent in the discipline which was to fit him to work for God has not been recorded in vain. It may well check our impatience, and put a bridle into our unruly mouths. God alone can teach each one how long we need to sit at Jesus' feet before we can enter on service without being cumbered. Simultaneously with all service, we need to be sitting there always, if the work is to be such as God can accept. *There* is the true Horeb, the desert into which Christ ever calls us, saying, "Come ye yourselves apart with me, and rest awhile," so that receiving from Him we may have to give to others. The time indeed is short, and not to be misspent. But time passed at the backside of the desert is not misspent, while there can be no sadder misspending in the child of God than to work in self-will when there should be a sitting in stillness to learn subjection of the will and affections to God.

That which is not of faith is sin. Self-appointed service is not of faith; for faith is the gift of God, and can rest only on His will made known to His child. Sin is lawlessness—the doing of anything otherwise than at the command of God made known to him who is appointed to do it. The failure of Moses teaches a deeper lesson. It is possible for me to have learned much of God's mind, and to be indeed the one by whom, in His own good time, it is His purpose that His work shall be effected, and yet to fall into sin through my natural restlessness, which will not wait for the years of discipline which are essential before God can use me as His servant. Did Moses, the man of God, err thus? And has the Spirit of God recorded this? And is there not in this a call to every one who

may think that he is serving God, or would embark on His service, to look well that no step be ever taken except as He directs?

Every servant of God called by God to any service, and doing it, as alone it can be done, in the power of God, does it as God would do it, calmly, noiselessly, irresistibly, looking aside to no one, whether Egyptian or Israelite. If self is crucified, it will be no longer *I* that live and act, but Christ that liveth in me. If self is not crucified, the crucifying of it is the first work; and this is carried out at "the backside of the desert," not in self-servings, and in its busy workings, which are its life. Till we are called and empowered of God, how blessed would it be to abstain from all working! We need to remember the special character of these last days—"a form of godliness," while "*the power*" is not only absent, but "denied."

It may seem to us that, if we cease from our own doings, some one Egyptian or many Egyptians who might have been slain will escape alive. Be it so. It is better that it should be so, that God should be waited for, and the flesh in the believer be recognised as utterly unable to work the works of God. There would thus be less evil done, and less to unlearn, should God in His grace drive or draw us away from our self-pleasings and self-deceivings. The training time for true service may be shortened when the self-activity in spiritual things has been repressed.

If we would keep a watch over our deceitful hearts, and be vigilant against the wiles of the evil one, we shall first take heed that our desire to serve God in any way springs solely from His love shed abroad in our hearts, and not from any one of the many motives, such as impatience, spiritual pride, the following of man, the approval of our fellow-Christians, which are ever ready to work as ferments in all of us, but which God can only repudiate, though they may lead us to give all our goods to feed the poor, and our bodies to

be burned. And having been helped by the Searcher of hearts (Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24) to make sure that our motive is the only right one, our next need is to see that *obedience*, a simple doing or abstaining, just as God Himself instructs, a waiting, however long, until we hear His voice, and then a doing solely as He bids,—that this is the rule of our service. Otherwise we may *in Christ's name* prophesy, *in Christ's name* cast out devils, and *in Christ's name* do many wonderful works, and yet earn the character of workers of lawlessness (*την ανομιαν*, Matt. vii. 23)—of that which may be in itself very good, but which God never commanded *us* to do.

The lesson traced in outline in one sphere of the Christian's experience has its teachings in others also. Its application to the sphere of the inner life, the most important of all, for it lies at the root of all, cannot here be entered on. The spiritual mind must follow this out for itself, as God shall give ability. But there, as in the outward sphere, all is true, all answers to the figure. No impatient effort of mine can destroy the host of Egyptians within, or bring about deliverance there. I may "fret" myself because of the ungodly inmates of my heart, and make earnest, honest, laborious, violent endeavours to dislodge and slay them, assured in all good conscience and simplicity that I must be in this doing the will of God, since it is His purpose that I should be delivered, and made a holy habitation fitted for the indwelling of Him who requireth truth in the inward parts. But here again, "He that believeth *shall not make haste.*" My place is "*to sit still.*"* In

* We must not forget that the Lord has commanded us to put off, keep under, and mortify the evils within us which we have no power to slay. God in His own time will deliver us perfectly, so that there will be no longer enemies to trouble us either within or without; but in the meantime we must maintain the conflict, and fight even unto the death; we must neither give place to the devil, nor indulge or make allowance for the evil of our nature; both must be resisted steadily, and then both may be trampled beneath our feet.—EDITOR.

returning and rest we shall be saved; in *quietness and confidence* shall be our strength. God will set free His true-hearted, patient, confiding child from every enemy. HE will destroy them all. We cannot help Him except by obedience, and simple, happy trust. Our restlessness may postpone the day of freedom, since God cannot bring us into the full deliverance till all has been yielded up to Him. When He, whose right it is, is received into our hearts to rule supreme, to direct every thought, and word, and deed, the Lord of every motion there, all that troubles will fall under His mighty arm. Deliverance from evil thus wrought will no longer lead to highmindedness and independence of Him; and we shall see, now that we can bear to see it, all our enemies and His enemies dead in the waters which have been the way of life to us.

WORK! WORK! WORK!

“Work while it is called to-day: the night cometh, when no man can work.”—JOHN ix. 4.

EVERY ray of truth is valuable; every barrier which helps to stem the rushing tide, though it be raised by the tiny fingers of a child, is indispensable; every voice, even though it be the lisping of an infant, that can speak of Jesus is needed. God, increase their number on every side!

Now is the time and hour when every heart, and hand, and pen, should use its energies on behalf of the truth. Shame that God's people should allow their *leisure* moments to be frittered away in idleness or without purpose, when they might each one be redeemed for His glory! Can those who do so truly estimate the present time? Can they really have at heart the interests of the Church or the world?

“Work! work! work!” is the voice sounding in our ears from the watch-towers of Zion. Work for Christ; work for the salvation of men; work for the

building up of the Church of God. Redeem the time. Count nothing too trifling to be used for Him. Despise no talent, however mean. Test your powers, and see what you can do, and do it for *Him* who loved you, and gave Himself for you.

Let not talents lie in oblivion. Bring the pound to light out of the earth or in the napkin, and see what it is worth, and for God's glory make use of it. "Work while it is called to-day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

Go forth! though weeping, bearing precious seed;
 Still sow in faith, though not a blade appears;
 Go forth! the Lamb Himself the way doth lead,
 The everlasting arms are o'er thee spread;
 Thou'lt reap in joy all thou hast sown in tears.

RICHES OF GRACE.

FATHER of mercies, God of grace!

Thou dost to us make known
 Thy light and glory in the face
 Of Jesus Christ, Thy Son.

The pure, ineffable display
 Of love and holiness
 In Him by faith we now survey,
 In Him by faith possess.

Riches of grace! through His own blood
 Our sins are all removed.

Glory of grace! we to our God
 Stand "graced in the Belov'd."

Mercy, it *round* us lies outspread,
 A shadowing banner *o'er*;
 It goes *before* us e'er to lead,
Behind us to restore.

Thy Spirit doth the blessing seal
 In each renewèd heart;
 He doth the heavenly truth reveal,
 The heavenly grace impart.

May we as in Thy presence live,
 Thy holy will obey;
 Grace, mercy, strength from Thee receive
 According to our day.

GLORYING IN THE CROSS.

"BUT God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby (marginal reading) the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."—Gal. vi. 14.

WHAT meaneth this Scripture? Does the apostle glory in a symbol? Nay, surely not. The cross of Christ was then a divisive sign. There were those who openly avowed their faith and hope in the crucified One, and these were contemned for His sake. There were those who sought to escape persecution by a conformity to the Jewish ceremonial, combined with a secret persuasion of the truth of the crucified One. There were those who hated the name of Christ, and persecuted to the death His followers.

Paul takes his stand by the cross of his Lord, and boldly avows that he glories therein; for to him it was the sign of eternal life, and that apart—wholly apart—from all the religion and ritual of the Jewish economy.

He gloried in the finished work thereon; he gloried in the risen One, who once poured forth His life thereon; not in the symbol, but in the reality, even in Him who, though once slain, had been raised of God to be a Prince and a Saviour.

Crosses are often worn as ornaments by young and old, in vain fancy that such betokens a confession of the crucified One.

The religious romance of the day develops itself in the patronage by the gay and worldly of the symbol of the cross. They are taught of "will-worship," and outward ritual; they learn of a cross without a living Christ, and of Christ apart from the cross. In Mark viii. 34–38, and in the parallel passages in Matthew and Luke, we learn what is really meant by bearing the cross.

In each place it will be seen that the Lord conjoined the following of Himself with death, as though the sequence were likely to end in death. To the Jew the mention of the cross was as the mention of the gallows would be to us, the sign of an ignominious, disgraceful death.

The Lord ever forewarned those who were following Him to count the cost, for it must end in the foregoing of all that was dear to flesh and blood, perhaps even in death itself, for His sake. He fairly told them that to follow Him was no easy matter, and even discouraged, rather than encouraged, the impulsive declarations of devotion and fervid assertion both in His disciples and in others, His followers on earth. And for this reason—He knew what was in man, and would not commit Himself to man; He knew that in the flesh there was no stability—no good thing; He knew that His own path to glory lay through the cross, and that in bringing many sons to glory He must endure the cross, despising the shame; He knew that His dying on the cross was the death-blow to any hopes in nature; and therefore He would have His followers know that, not in the excited feelings of mere natural zeal, but in the calm power of a new life received in virtue of His death and resurrection, they would have to follow Him below; He would have them learn that, by His death on the cross, God gave token of the utter inability of any by natural effort to attain to godly living here; for “we thus judge, that if One died for all, then (it shows surely!) all were dead: that they which live (*i.e.*, made alive in Christ) should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them, and rose again.”

Thus, then, we may learn that the cross writes death on nature, but that it gives hope of a new life, through the crucified and risen One, to all who believe in Him.

To take up the cross then, and follow Jesus, was

openly to declare willingness to be accounted nothing for His sake, and to go even to the death. The bearing of the cross daily was a proof that the bearer was ready even to lose his life for Christ's sake and the gospel's.

There is often the impression that to bear the cross means to take our daily cares and trials meekly; but there is no such meaning attached to it in Scripture, (blessed though it be for those who do bear their burdens meekly). The plain meaning of bearing the cross is *death*, or rather willingness to die even an ignominious death for Christ's sake; a foregoing, willingly, all personal, relative, social, political advantages, honours, and glories, for Christ's sake.

Thus the apostle meant that his boast was in the cross of his Lord, which, though it might entail the loss of every earthly advantage, was to him an eternal gain. He wished to glory in nothing else; for what had any one, or anything else, done for him?

Now, do those who wear the cross in these days ever seriously reflect on what they are doing? The Lord loveth not "will-worship," neither is He pleased by the patronage of the natural heart. To forego, for Christ's sake, all that is pleasing to the natural heart; to leave *all* for Christ's sake, and to be as a crucified thing to the world, and to view the world as some hateful, crucified object; to follow Christ in the calm power of a renewed heart, guided and energised by His holy Spirit—is what is meant by the apostle in the verse quoted at the beginning.

Oh, cross-wearers, I entreat you to become cross-bearers: Take from your necks the symbol of the death of shame to which the ever-blessed One was by wicked hands brought! It ill becomes any to disfigure themselves with the symbol of that which was to Him a means of suffering and death!

To know Him, to follow Him, to glory in Him, is what He calls on you to do. Not by a symbol of

death, but by death itself to all that is hateful to Him—by meekly following in His footsteps. So shall ye become worthy of the Crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.

THE MANNA.

It was to be gathered every day as it fell. It is only as we each one individually receive that which is of God, fresh as it comes down from above, that it is truly sweet, and profitable, and life-supporting. If we attempt to keep for our sustenance to-morrow that which is nutritious only as received each moment directly from Him who alone is the source of strength and life, it will but “breed worms and stink.” It is the same if—as is now, alas! everywhere the habit—we go to other Israelites to receive from them that of which God, who is a jealous God, must be the only Giver, because if man be put in His place, what is received can never be for blessing—if we go to them for that which they may have gathered, and which may even have been to the refreshment of their own souls, or (alas! how frequently) for that which was not even gathered, or fed upon, by them, but received by them from some others, who themselves may not have received it from those to whom it came down in the wilderness from heaven from God.

Every grain received by the soul from above is “power,” and will surely make itself seen in fruit-bearing and conformity to Christ. All that is not so received is but the form of godliness, and ministers only the form, while the power is denied. It needs the miracle which sends the manna down to make it to minister to the soul’s life. It has no inherent power, apart from fellowship with Him who sends it, to nourish or sustain. In all the abounding outward activity in spiritual things in these last evil days, who

shall say how much of the manna supplied on all sides is from some old stores hoarded up in disobedience to the command of God ; how much is received from others—eminent, enlightened, religious, it may be, to any extent—who have kept in their own earthen vessels that which so kept can but corrupt ; how many—rather, how few—of God's redeemed ones truly gather up each one for himself or herself each day, each hour, directly what comes from above ; how many are living immediately on that which proceeds from the mouth of God !

CAUGHT UP.

“ We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.”—1 COR. xv. 51.

“ For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first : then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air : and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”—1 THESS. iv. 16, 17.

“ CAUGHT up, caught up !” no wing required ;
 Caught up to Him, by love inspired,
 To meet Him in the air !
 Spurning the earth, with upward bound,
 Nor casting a single glance around,
 Nor listing a single earth-born sound—
 Caught up in the radiant air !

Panting with rapture and surprise,
 “ Caught up,” our fond affections rise
 Our coming LORD to meet ;
 Hearing the trumpet's glorious sound,
 Soaring to join the rising crowd,
 Gazing upon the parted cloud
 Beneath His pierced feet !

O blessed ! O thrice blessed word !
 To be “ for ever with the LORD,”
 In heavenly beauty fair !
 Up ! up ! we long to hear the cry ;
 Up ! up ! our absent LORD draws nigh ;
 Yes, “ in the twinkling of an eye,”
 “ To meet Him in the air !”

SALVATION, SERVICE, ASSOCIATION.

II. THE GOLD AND SILVER VESSELS.

“In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work.”—2 TIM. ii. 20, 21.

In this passage the symbol of gold is added to that of silver in the last, the better to show God's estimate of His children's worth; and, for reasons we shall consider, those of wood and earthenware are also introduced. We are, moreover, carried one step further in the divine dealings. For while in Luke xv. the question was one of finding the lost, or redemption, that being settled, it is of service and sanctification that the Spirit here treats.

The house is still the same, the company of those who call Jesus Christ Saviour and Lord, who profess allegiance to His name. It is the earthly representative people, who correspond in *this* age with the Israelites in a past, as owning and acknowledging God. And as the question is one of service, that of our eternal hope or position is not introduced. The only point before us is, What service will stand in the Master's eye, and what shall be disapproved?

The notion of diversity is brought out in the variety of vessels; for while redemption is uniform, service is diverse and various. Some vessels of God are richly endowed, some but poorly so. Some are capacious vessels, by which many may be served; others are little and mean, with a limited sphere of service. There are “diversities of gifts,” and therefore “differences of administrations” (or ministries).

Let me have my reader's consent so far. It is very good and blessed to be redeemed, to be reclaimed, to be possessed of Christ, like the silver piece when found,

with this most comforting assurance added, that once found none shall pluck us from His strong hand.

But it will not do to stop there. The silver piece must now be moulded into vessels for all manner of service. Gratitude impels, as love constrains the willing soul redeemed, to give itself up henceforth to the self-denying service of Him who endured such sufferings to redeem it. It says with Saul of Tarsus, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and thenceforth waits upon Him, and looks to Him for direction, as the eyes of a servant to the hand of his master, esteeming it a reasonable sacrifice to give up spirit, soul, and body to His use, now as well as hereafter.

This much granted, let us seek further into the intention of our parable. "Some," it says, "to honour, and some to dishonour." Vessels to dishonour, unfit for the Master's use, and these also in the house! The spirit cries out within us, "Forbid it that I should ever be one of these!" It is a word that strikes at the conscience, telling us that service is not enough, and to be a vessel is not enough, for of vessels there are many; but to be vessels *unto honour*, amid many unto dishonour, must be our ambition. May God lead my reader thus far also, with a willing and cheerful surrender of everything most dear, that may lead to this blessed result.

But how may I become an honoured vessel? How attain that sweet and happy prize, to be fit for my dear Master's use? Timothy learns this in the words that follow: "If a man purge himself," &c.

Thus may this high and holy ambition be reached. For so also it is among men, as to the vessels of a house—*cleanliness* is everything. If only it be purged, and clean, and pure, the earthen pitcher takes the place of honour from the golden goblet that is not so. The King Himself in His glory is more honoured by the service of the simplest utensil, purified from all uncleanness, than He would be by the costliest vessel wanting this condition.

Here is the all-important lesson taught us in this simple appeal to the habits of domestic life. Vessels to be unto honour must be purged from all uncleanness. "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use."

"Purge himself from these." A question is often raised as to what the word "these" refers to, and some have supposed it to refer to the "vessels of wood and of earth;" but a moment's thought will suffice to show that the analogy of the passage fails under this interpretation.

A vessel in the house does not get its honour or use by virtue of the shelf on which it stands, or of the vessels which stand near it, but by virtue of its cleanliness. A golden bowl, or silver spoon, covered with dust, though taken from a chest wherein nothing but gold and silver plate were kept, would not on that account be rendered fit for honourable uses; they must also be first cleansed. Nor yet, on the other hand, if clean, would they be disqualified because they were kept in proximity with vessels of humbler material.

This I conceive to be indisputable. Furthermore, we speak not of "*purging*" ourselves from one another, but from evil things, and ways, and habits. The word is the same as that used in 2 Cor. vii. 1: "Let us *cleanse* ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit;" and in the same sense would it be understood if the expression were used of a vessel. The purging or cleansing of a vessel could not be understood, in ordinary parlance, to mean its removal to other company, but the removal from it of all its own uncleanness, whether inward or outward. Thus the sense of the words, as well as the analogy of the parable, confirms this simple interpretation.

The evils specially referred to are the "profane and vain babblings" of heretics, to which the servant of God was to shut his ear. He was to hold fast the form

of sound words, but to refuse the oppositions of science (falsely so called), and to flee also youthful lusts.

This brings to mind the type of Numbers xix. 15 : "Every open vessel, which hath no covering found upon it, is unclean." To be meet for the Master's use, the doors of the Christian's mind and soul must be closed against the admission of impurity, and thus he shall be a vessel unto honour; but otherwise he is unclean. The riches of endowment and gift will not make up for want of inward holiness; nay, but they themselves shall be disgraced. On the other hand, there is rich comfort for the feeble saint who says, "What am I but a vessel of wood or earth?" Yet, if purged, he can say with Paul, "We have *this treasure* in earthen vessels," and know himself, though poor and feeble, to "be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use."

In the vessels of gold and silver, then, we can see those servants of God who are most richly endowed; in the wooden and earthen those who are less so. Each of us may find here a simile of himself, and each an appeal to the depth of his conscience. Is our service showy and prominent? or is it little and unscen? The question to ask ourselves, the great essential to maintain, is, Are our hearts under the constant sanctifying influence of the indwelling Spirit? Does the service flow forth from a purged heart, a single motive, and clean hands? Herein alone can it have any worth.

Thus may the simplest efforts meet the Master's approbation, and the highest and noblest gifts be crowned with honour from God. But otherwise the gold and silver will be as sounding brass or tinkling cymbal, and the wood and earthen vessels be devoid of heavenly "treasure." If in God's grace you have a place in His house, remember above all things the word that says, "Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, for ever."

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN CHRIST.

Inquiry.—If the believer be justified by the death, *i.e.*, the curse-bearing, the penalty-sustaining of Christ, how becomes he the “righteousness of God in Christ”? If the believer be absolved from guilt, and further, reckoned righteous and good (and let us ever bear in mind that justification signifies, not clearance only, but clothing or investing), not by vicarious performance of law, but by vicarious endurance of the pains of violated law, what lacks he, so that the “righteousness of God should be imputed to him”? How can he, accounted righteous by his sins having been borne and himself represented in Christ’s expiating and justifying death, receive the “righteousness of God”? What to such an one *is* the righteousness of God? What its nature? What its place? What does it imputatively constitute or actually create him who is already cleared from fault or spot and clothed with perfectness?

Upon this most momentous subject the Scripture teaches (see Rom. vi. 1–11; Gal. iii. 27; Eph. ii. 10; iv. 21–24; Col. ii. 11–13) that the believer is one that has died, and has been raised from death; that he has died under judgment, and been raised into “newness of life,” even life everlasting, spiritual, divine—the life of God through union with Christ; that in dying he has been baptized into the death and burial of Christ, and has put off the “old man;” and in being raised from death he has been “raised in the likeness of Christ’s resurrection,” and has put on the “new man;” summarily, that in having been “baptized into Christ,” or “buried with Christ in baptism,” he has put off himself and put on Christ—put off “the body of the flesh,” fleshliness, or the nature of Adam, with all its unrighteousness and badness, and put on spirituality

or the nature of CHRIST, the Eternal Son, the Word of Life, the "RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD."

The believer, then, is a man WASHED—washed from his sins and his guilt; washed from his being and nature in Adam; washed in BLOOD, that is, in *death*, purged, stripped, disrobed, spoiled in *death*, himself destroyed and put off and away in *death*; and a man CLOTHED—clothed in *resurrection*, clothed with the life and nature of Christ, robed with Christ, clothed, and furnished, and "filled up" (see Col. ii. 10) with Him who is "the fulness of the Godhead," and the "righteousness of God."

Thus by death, the death of Christ on the cross, is justification (imputation of godliness and goodness to him who is ungodly and bad); and in resurrection, the rising and "living of Christ unto God," is the investiture of the justified. And as the death and the resurrection of Christ is, although two stages, but one work, so the accounting just of the unjust, and the quickening of him unto righteousness, even the "righteousness of God in Christ," is one acting of God's grace, one "working of His mighty power," one "exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe." (See Rom. i. 16, 17; iii. 21, 22; ix. 30, 31; x. 3, 4, 9, 10; 2 Cor. v. 21; Phil. iii. 8, 9, 10.)

This doctrine may be presented yet more plainly. The believer is one that has *put off* and *put on*; put off Adam and put on Christ; put off Adam in the crucifixion, death, and burial of Christ, and put on Christ in the resurrection of Christ; put off sinfulness, and put on righteousness—sinfulness under God's wrath and judgment, righteousness, even "God's righteousness," that newness of nature and life which is Christ raised from the dead, and into which is raised or "created" he who died in Christ.

Thus JUSTIFICATION OF PERSON is by the offering of the body of Christ; and this imputation of justness and goodness to the unjust ("ungodly, without strength,

sinner, enemy,") is perfect on the sole ground of Christ's sacrificial and expiatory death—perfect solely on Christ's *passion, curse-bearing, outpouring of soul, blood-shedding*; and RIGHTEOUSNESS OF NATURE, even the impartation of the divine nature, is (*not* to the unjust or ungodly one, *not* to the "without strength, the sinner, the enemy," but to the man *justified*, the man *justified by the blood*, the man *already* accounted just, righteous, good) by the quickening of such man into Christ raised, Christ the root, the stock, the spring and seat of righteousness, even the "righteousness of God."

By *death*, then (the death in Christ of the believer), is the imputation of God's righteousness; and in *resurrection* (the resurrection with Christ of the believer) is the impartation of God's righteousness. By death is the *constituting* righteous; in resurrection is the *creating* righteous.

Lastly, the "garments of salvation," or the robes of righteousness (Isa. lxi. 10; Rev. vii. 9, 14), and the "gold tried in the fire," the "white raiment or fine linen" (Rev. iii. 5, 18; xix. 8), as well as "the waters," "the wine and milk," "the good and the fatness," "the true bread, the living bread, the bread of God" (Isa. lv.; John vi.), are not *articles* of apparel, or array, or nutriment, but Christ Himself—Christ in His person and fulness, Christ the righteousness and the riches of God, Christ the fountain of all substance and all good, Christ the eternal life.

JOSHUA, A TYPE OF CHRIST.

IN various points, and with a closer similarity of outline than belongs, perhaps, to any other figure in the Old Testament, is Joshua the type of Christ. His very name begins the great imitation. Changed by Moses—doubtless at the mouth of the Lord—from *Oshea*—"welfare"—to *Jehoshua* or *Jesus*—"God the

Saviour"—it pointed him out as the figure of the heavenly Deliverer.

Joshua, moreover, is pre-eminently one of the people whom he delivers; he has worked with them in the brick-kilns of Egypt; he knows their hearts; in all their afflictions he has been afflicted. And so Jesus stooped to be made in all things like unto His brethren; that, having been Himself tried with all temptations, He might know how to succour them that are tempted.

When Joshua had entered on his leadership, prophetic acts, full of typical significance, begin with a wonderful minuteness to manifest themselves. He, and not the great lawgiver, is to bring the people into Canaan: Moses must depart to secure his every word of promise being fulfilled to Israel, as the law must pass away and be fulfilled before the spiritual Israel could enter on their kingdom.

At the river Jordan, Joshua is shown by God to Israel as their appointed leader; there God began to magnify him. As Jesus comes up from the river Jordan, the heavens open, the Holy Ghost descends, and the voice of God declares, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." At Jordan's waters He, too, is declared to be given as a leader and a commander to the people.

From Jordan's bed Joshua took twelve stones, to be for evermore a witness to the people of their great deliverance; from His baptism in Jordan, Jesus began to call His twelve apostles, the foundation-stones of that Church which witnesses to every generation of the redemption of the sons of Abraham by Christ.

As soon as the chosen people, soiled by their long travel in the wilderness, enter the land of promise, Joshua renews in their circumcision the covenant of Jehovah's peace. And Jesus grants to all who pass the Jordan with Him the true circumcision of the Spirit.

The Captain of the Host, as God reveals Himself to

Joshua, is ever with the great earthly warrior of the people; and in the Man Christ Jesus dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

The mighty walls of Jericho fall low as Joshua marches his appointed circuits around them, compassing them seven times with the ark of God's presence; and as Jesus accomplishes His course, the world-citadel falls low; for unto the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit yields the will of man, and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ.

Joshua leads the people of God into the promised land; but they must fight for their possession; and Jesus, though He brings His own into the spiritual Canaan of His Church, has come not to bring peace, but a sword. Not one of His can sit down and dream his life away; each one has life's battle, earnest, hard, severe, to fight. As Joshua said of old to the children of Joseph, so to each one of His speaks our Captain, pointing to the hill of light and the everlasting inheritance — "Thou art a great people, and hast great power; thou shalt not have one lot only, but the mountain shall be thine."

When his work was over, Joshua mounted the hill of Ephraim, and dwelt in his own possession—not falling to him as to others of his brethren, by the lot, but as his own right, yielded to him as the conqueror of all; and even so went up the Captain of our salvation to the heaven in which He was before—His own by right, His own by conquest. For "this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool." (Heb. x. 12, 13.)

Before Joshua departed, he called to him on that mountain of Timnath Serah, which he was about to leave, all the heads of the tribes, and with the chant of a prophetic voice set before them all the grand future, which, if they clave steadfastly to God, should

certainly be theirs ; and so before He ascended into the heavens did the great Captain of God's spiritual army appoint to meet, upon a mountain-top in Galilee, the heads of all the tribes into which His people should multiply ; and there, looking with them over the far outstretched dominions of the earth, did He utter to them, Joshua-like, the words of wonder which rang for ever in their ears : " All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth ; go ye therefore and evangelize all nations." (Matt. xxviii. 18, 19.)

Yea, and yet again after a higher sort than belongs to this present world, was Joshua the type of Jesus. For it is He who for each one who follows Him, the true Captain of their salvation, divides the cold waters of death, setting against their utmost flood, even when that Jordan overfloweth its banks, as it doth all the harvest time, the ark of the body which He took of us, and in which God dwelleth evermore ; so making a way for His ransomed to pass over.

It is He who hath gone before to prepare, amongst the many mansions of His Father's house, the place which the golden lot marks out for us ; it is He who hath trodden down all our enemies ; it is He who hath built the golden city upon the " twelve foundation-stones, which bear the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb ;" it is He at whose trumpet sound, when the seven days of the great week are accomplished, the walls of Babylon shall fall ; it is He who goeth forth conquering and to conquer, until all His enemies are put under His feet ; and so the last type of this life of wonders shall be fulfilled, and the true Joshua, from the exceeding high mountain of His Timnath Serah, shall look around Him on the tribes of God, and see them all at peace ; the prayer-promise which was breathed in time fulfilled in eternity : " Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory, which I had with thee before the world was."

“MY FLESH;” “MY BLOOD.”

How often we read these words of our blessed Master, and yet we take little more than a superficial view of them, leaving their depths and breadths unfathomed and unheeded.

There is, perhaps, no chapter in the Bible we are more familiar with than John vi., and yet, perhaps, there are few chapters from which we derive a less definite conception of the import of the words uttered—words at once so simple that a child draws instruction from them, and yet so profound that none will fathom them till they see Him as He is, and hear from His lips their full meaning.

Jesus is ever revealing Himself to us according to our need; but the need must precede the revelation, or it will not be valued; and hence the needs-be of life's history; for God's teachings are not theoretic, but practical; not vague and general, but specific and personal.

John vi. opens with the multitudes going into the wilderness after Jesus, and He, ever compassionate, and ever sufficient for the need of all, feeds the five thousand with the five barley loaves and the two small fishes. The multitudes follow across the sea Him whom they would fain have taken by force and made a king, and He meets them with the command, “Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto life eternal, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for Him hath God the Father sealed.”

Why are we to *labour* for that which is *given*? On the harmonizing of this apparent paradox—not in theory, but in reality—hangs the salvation of every soul. Every one begotten of God has harmonized it in his own experience; he may not see how, but he has

found that that which he has got free—"without money," and "without price"—has cost him more to "buy" than he ever contemplated when first the sense of need dawned upon his soul. There *was* a labouring, and there *is* a labouring still, without which the blessings of the gospel, in their fulness and freeness, never can be enjoyed.

"Buy the truth, and sell it not," is wisdom's precept to her children; and yet, alas! how many sell the truth, as Esau sold his birthright, for a mess of pottage; and if sold, it is lost.

Jesus has been sealed and anointed that He might meet the necessities of fallen man. For this was He sent into the world, and for this He left the bosom of the Father; and here He presents Himself as the One sealed to give bread to the hungry.

From verse 32 to verse 51, the Lord presents Himself as "*the True Bread*" under the following aspects: "The Living Bread," and "the Bread of Life;" "the Bread of God," and "the Bread from God;" "the Bread of Heaven," and "the Bread from Heaven;" "the Bread which came," and "the Bread which comes." Each of the above expressions contains a specific meaning, which may well occupy our hearts and thoughts, each developing in different directions, the significance of that in which Jesus is characterized as "the True Bread," in whom dwelleth the fulness of the Deity bodily. And that fulness dwells in Him that it may be communicated to us through the Holy Ghost; that the Church may become "the fulness of Him who filleth all in all."

Into these depths we may not now enter, but turn to our Lord's own explanation. "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." To this the Jews demur, and say, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?"

Our Lord's reply is as follows: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of

man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.”

May our hearts be solemnized as we seek to unveil to ourselves the divine mysteries, first of the implantation of the divine life in man, and then of the sustainment of that life till its ultimate manifestation in the glory, when those begotten of God shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

In contemplating this subject, we must be as careful not to divide the person of Christ, as we are not to confound the natures. Christ is ever to be looked upon as one Person, and we ought not to allow ourselves to distinguish as if He did one thing as man, and something else as God. Whatever He did was done in the indivisibility of His most sacred Person; and all that He suffered, He suffered in His entire being, taking His Deity into all His manhood, and carrying His manhood into His Godhead.

It was not merely as man He suffered on the cross: it was HIMSELF that suffered; it was HIMSELF He gave; and it is HIMSELF unto whom we shall be gathered when He comes. This explains that expression in Acts xx.: “The Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood.”

We have already noticed the various epithets used of the Bread that Jesus gives to them that receive Him, and from verse 51 we learn that the Bread is the flesh of Christ. Hence we have to attach to the flesh of Christ the expressions made use of in connection with

the Bread; and the flesh of Christ becomes living, divine, and heavenly, because the Bread is called the Bread of Life, of God, and of heaven.

This at once reveals the emphasis to be attached to the word *MY* when Jesus says, "My flesh is meat indeed;" for to the flesh of Christ attaches the mystery of His own blessed Person; for we are told that "the Word *became* flesh"—not took flesh, or assumed it, but became flesh—and thus connected with His flesh are the living, divine, and heavenly characteristics that belong to the Word who "was with God," and who "was God."

* * * * *

It is very precious to the renewed soul thus to contemplate the Bread of God given to him to feed on; for as we feed on Him, life, God, and heaven are wrought out in us, who have been made partakers of a divine nature, and therefore need divine food to sustain our life, and to transform us into divine and heavenly glory. He who said at the supper to His disciples, "This is my body which is given for you," is He of whom it is written, that "in Him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Let us now inquire what the drinking of the blood of Christ implies. The reader of the Old Testament need not be reminded of the exceeding stringency of the command not to touch blood under any pretence whatever, neither as ordinary food nor in connection with sacrifice.

The blood is said to be "the life," or more properly, "the soul,"* and this was regarded as sacred to God. If the animal was eaten for food, the blood was poured out upon the earth; and if used in sacrifice, was poured out at the altar. Thus apparently God would keep

* The word used in Hebrew is *נֶפֶשׁ* and in Greek, *ψυχη*. (See Lev. xvii. 11, 14, &c.)

alive in the minds of all that all life belongs to Him.

Here, however, as if setting aside all the previous revelations on this subject, our Lord gives His blood as the drink of those who would live by Him. Why was this, but that the Lord was introducing a truth to His hearers which was beyond all Old Testament revelation? *There* blood was given for atonement—that is, as a covering over; but here that which had been in type an atonement and reconciliation now becomes in the person of Christ the communication of something altogether new—the communication of life itself.

This result of atonement the types were not allowed to foreshadow; it was reserved for the advent of the Eternal Sacrifice to make known the relation between the life of the Substitute and the life of the sinner. The type went so far as to show the doctrine of substitution and imputation; but the mystery of the impartation of real life to the dead sinner was not revealed until He came from the bosom of the Father, and “brought to light life and immortality;” for “in Him was life, and the life was the light of men.”

The blood of the victims was poured forth, and Jesus poured forth His soul (that is, Himself—His life, His blood) unto death, and that which He has poured forth He gives to drink to those who come to Him. That which He gave up when he said, “I lay it down of myself,” has to be taken up and appropriated by them, and to become the life, the soul, the reality of a new and eternal life, even the life of the Son of God, who gave up Himself that through His death there might be life to all who believe.

Thus the precious blood of Christ becomes connected with two distinct truths—the one speaking of forgiveness and reconciliation, by the putting away of all sin through the penalty for sin endured by the atoning Sacrifice; the other speaking of life—the life of the

Son of God—communicated through the substitution of His unforfeited life, in grace poured out, to be received by the reconciled sinner in lieu of his justly forfeited life.

Thus that blood which speaks of death to Christ speaks of life to all who appropriate it. It is, in the first place, "the blood of the new covenant, shed for many for the remission of sins;" and in the second, that "drink indeed," of which he who drinks "hath eternal life" and the promise of resurrection at the last day. The one represents the negative, and the other the positive, virtues of that blood which "precious faith" has learnt how to estimate.

We have been contemplating some of the deep mysteries belonging to the eating of the flesh and the drinking of the blood of the Son of man; and as if to carry our thoughts still higher and still deeper into the mighty realities of these truths, which are not figurative truths, though expressed in figurative language, the Lord draws a comparison between His relation to the Father and our relation to Him: "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father;* so he that eateth me, even he shall live through me."

How wonderful to contemplate the absolute and eternal relation of the Son to the Father, the source of life, and then to compare with it the relation of the believer to his Saviour, a relation which, by our unbelieving, mistrusting hearts, is but too often so feebly realized! Yet thus need we to contemplate if we would understand the absoluteness of that eternal purpose which God hath purposed in Himself in reference to us. How much is unfolded by that little word "AS" (*καθως*, even as). As is the one, so is the other.

* The preposition here used is *δια*, with an accusative following, and expresses not *the means by which*, but, as Alford remarks, "the efficient cause."

It is this verse that gives its depth to all that has been said of Jesus in this wonderful chapter, as the meat and drink of His people; figures of speech the full meaning of which eternity alone can reveal. As we dwell upon these words now, our hearts, much more our minds, fail to grasp what they involve; but as we meditate on the relation of the Son to the Father, we are able to say, “If my relation to Christ is as sure, as certain, and as eternally fixed as is Christ’s relation to the Father, *it is enough.*” Yes, truly it is enough—enough to sustain the tried soul under all the temptations and sorrows of the way, whether from the world, the flesh, or the devil; enough to make the dying pillow soft as is the bosom of Jesus to all who in life or in death recline there; enough to give boldness in the glory of the eternal kingdom, for as Christ is to the Father, so are we to Him. “As He is, so are we,” both here and hereafter.

In conclusion, we would make one remark on our Lord’s words in verse 63. “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you are spirit and are life.” The Jews had been stumbled at the statements made, and ask, “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?” To this our Lord simply reiterates what He had before said, and still further adds thereto.

We now hear that many of His disciples were offended, and said, “This is a hard saying; who can hear it?” Our Lord then explains that it was no literal eating and drinking that He had in view; for the Son of Man was to ascend up where He was before, and therefore they were to see that the *spirit* of what He said, and not the visible flesh, was that which was presented to the acceptance of their faith. He does not say “*my flesh* profiteth nothing,” but gives them to understand that although in His bodily form He was to ascend into the heavens, the truths He had been speaking of remained still in living, spiritual

power, and to these would He direct their attention and ours.

May these words become spirit and life to all our hearts, that we may live in the mighty power of divine life, even as Jesus lived and acted in the power of the life of God that was in Him, and which is in us, if we are in Him and He in us.

THE CHURCH OF PHILADELPHIA.

REVELATION iii. 7-12.

PART I.

“My leanness, my leanness!” is oftentimes the cry of many a true and earnest soul, even though such may be able to rejoice in the holiness and truthfulness of the blessed God. They stay themselves upon the Holy One of Israel, rest in His faithfulness and grace, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness. Though painfully conscious of their own shortcomings and weakness, they delight in His holy and perfect law, and would not have a single precept altered. He is the refuge of their weary souls, the One in whose tender mercy and loving-kindness they confide and trust, and to whose mighty arm they look to meet their every need, and bring them forth more than conquerors.

How suited, then, the Lord’s address to the church of Philadelphia! They had but a little strength, but had kept His word, and had not denied His name, and He reveals Himself to them as “He that is holy, He that is true.”

He had commanded them to be holy, even as He is holy; and as they pondered on His intense and perfect holiness, their souls were strengthened to maintain the path of holy separation upon which they had entered; and as they thought upon His truthfulness, their hearts grew doubly sure that HE could never fail them nor forsake; and thus their faith revived, and fear and unbelief were driven away.

Again, He speaks of Himself as "He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;" and then so graciously adds, "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it."

They evidently felt their weakness, and were surrounded by those who were apparently strong to hinder them in their obedience and service to the Lord. But what was such strength when waged against the word of the living God? If He open the door, who can shut it? How powerless is man's poor, puny arm when lifted against the mighty God! If He but shake His hand, His enemies are scattered; and if He but speak the word, they come to naught.

"Speak unto the people that they go forward," was God's command to Moses when the proud waves of the Red Sea seemed utterly to forbid their progress. But He blew with His wind, and made a way for His ransomed to pass over.

So it is now. Let us but follow where He leads, and every effort to bar our progress will be in vain. The door may not open until the last moment, as was the case with Peter (see Acts xii.); but onward, onward still, should be our motto; and as we press forward in obedience to His word, we shall prove that He has gone out before us to winnow our path, and to open doors which none can shut.

But can the Lord say of us, "Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name"? Is His strength made perfect in our weakness? Can *we* say, "When I am weak, then am I strong"? Can *we* glory in our infirmities, because the power of Christ rests upon us?

In the wonderful economy of God's grace He has ordained that we should have no strength in ourselves. The angels excel in strength, and do His commandments; but sinners, redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, and united to Him as their

Lord, their Life, their Head, must hang upon HIM for strength.

As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can *we* except we abide in Christ. Without HIM we can do nothing. He loves us with such a love, that He would have us continually abide in His presence. Marvellous is it, and yet blessedly true, that our voice is so sweet to Him that He would have it always sounding in His ear.

Wonderful indeed it is, yea, passing strange, that He, the King of glory, should love us thus; that He should seek our company, desire our love, and labour thus to bind our heart's affections round Himself. Eternity alone will tell the tale of all His grace has done, and all the tender, gracious ways in which He sought to overcome our cold indifference and heartless selfishness, and teach us how to love.

He has redeemed us to HIMSELF that we may be His friends and companions, and so walk with Him that we may continually receive out of His fulness the grace and wisdom which we need. He will *not* give us a store of our own which we can use at our pleasure, but He holds all the supplies in His *own* hand that we may be constrained to keep close to Him.

He *could* have made us strong, but that would have defeated His blessed and glorious object concerning us. Samson-like, we might then have used our strength to exalt and please ourselves instead of cleaving to Him. Now, our very weakness *obliges* us to fly to Him. We *cannot* stand alone. The slightest breath of temptation will throw us down unless we are hanging upon Him.

Oh, may we lean our weakness upon His mighty arm! and thus our *little* strength will bring the power of God within our reach; and, strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, we shall be prepared and furnished unto every good word and work.

“Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do

lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee."

We need not linger now to inquire who these professed Jews were; rather let us apply the passage to ourselves, as enunciating a very blessed and important truth.

We well know the pain of being misunderstood and misrepresented, whether wilfully or ignorantly; and the Lord Jesus, who is full of compassion, and touched with the feeling of our infirmities, seeks in this way to soothe and comfort the soul which is thus harassed. He seems to say, "Fear not, for I will justify you. Only a little while, and those who speak thus falsely of you shall come and do you honour; yea, worship at your feet. Take up your cross and bear it meekly for this little while, and I will give you a full reward. Your righteousness *shall* be revealed, and all shall know that I esteem and prize these very things for which you are now condemned; yea, they shall know that you were one on whom my love could rest with full delight, because you sought to do my will."

Dear suffering saint, maligned and injured though you be, just ponder on these words, and can you mind your present grief? Ah! will you think it hard to bear? Behold the rich reward! Think of the praise your own beloved Lord will give! Gaze on the scene unfolded to you here, and leave your cause with Him. Let not your spirit fret because of unkind words; remember He will set all right. Let not your anger rise because of false and cruel charges, but take and bear them meekly, and He will judge your cause.

The clearing day is when we stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. All secrets then will be revealed. Each false or unkind charge will be cleared up, and every one shall have their full and overflowing meed of praise.

And can we not afford to wait? Shall we not meekly bow our heads and bear the cross? These

very things should work in us the precious fruits of patience, gentleness, and love. This is our Father's object in permitting them. He seeks to exercise our souls, desires to see us grow in grace, and day by day He plans and orders *trials* for us, that in these very trials our souls may bring forth fruit to Him, and lay up treasure for ourselves in heaven.

The Lord enable us to learn patiently and live out faithfully these precious lessons of His grace!

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS

OF ONE WHO WALKED WITH GOD, AND WHO WENT TO BE WITH HIM,
July 13th, 1872.

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.”

“Now, dear —, your case is a sorrow, an *appointed* sorrow however—a case of blessing therefore. That this is of the Lord you know; for you know *Him*. There is, in my judgment, even *appearance*, or plain intimation, that it is of the Lord. Be thou busy about *His* business; He will occupy Himself with *thine*; and oh, if we but leave Him to His own love, and wisdom, and power, what wondrous things will He bring to pass! Stand still, and observe His way and working. (Psalm cvii. 43.)

“It is all well, quite well; the Lord hath granted you a deliverance, and He may soon grant you to see and feel this. Praise Him *now* in faith.”

“— says: ‘As this is your first trial, may it be your only one!’ I do not re-utter her words. If this be your first trial, be assured it is the first of a long, long, life-long series. And faint thou not like one of small strength, or one destitute of a Comforter in the day of adversity; but ‘count it all joy when thou fallest into divers trials.’ Tu ne cede malis, sed contra audentior ito, et macte novâ virtute.* To the Lord I

* Yield thou not to evils, but against them go more boldly, and strive with fresh courage.

commit you, and to the all-instructing and all-sustaining word of His grace.”

“Suggest through —— some passages for the consideration of the ‘mighty in the Scriptures.’ *Ex. gratia*, What are the distinct blessings ascribable, the one to the bread, the other to the wine, in the Eucharist? If the FLESH be meat indeed, what deficiency remains for the *blood* to supply? how is the blood drink indeed?”

“As every one (*i. e.*, every one of the holy family) has his calling of God, so has every one his proper gift of God. If the Lord ‘rise early’ to send His prophet and His commandment, rise thou early, and wait thou observantly to receive His messenger and message. ‘The believer shall not make haste.’”

“You say, ‘I want to know *Him* in it (*i. e.*, in any doctrine), not to learn it without Him.’ Do we not often learn doctrine in the purely natural way, receiving the Lord afterwards, perhaps long afterwards, and not *in* the doctrine, but through meditation upon it, obedience to it, and much exercise, mental, moral, and spiritual, in connection with it? Should we not accept doctrine, if it but commend itself as sound and just? accept truth, although but instruction or light? accept even fact, although its significance or teaching appear not? accept the bare matter, purposing to draw forth ‘its marrow by pondering’? (See Gen. xxxvii. 10, 11; Dan. vii. 28; Luke ii. 19; Rev. i. 3.)”

“My inquiry was not about the bread as the symbol of flesh to be eaten, and about the wine as the symbol of blood to be drunk. It was this: Since (according to John vi. 51, 58, and 1 Cor. x. 17) the bread symbolizes the Lord as the perpetual nourishment of the spiritual or God-begotten man, what good thing is left for the *blood* to symbolize? what does the *blood* bestow? what

is its significance, or place, or relation, whether to him who drinks it or to *Him* who shed it? If *I* give you my interpretation, I shall be giving you doctrine without the Lord. If *you*, by 'pondering' and 'keeping in the heart,' attain to the interpretation, you will obtain doctrine *with* the Lord. (Psalm i. 2.) Adieu."

"Your thought on the significance of the BLOOD at that table from which the Lord our life feeds His members with His FLESH is exactly the interpretation of the symbol which the Spirit has taught me. I have been enabled to say much (at our . . . meetings) about this ordinance of the blood as the sanction, the strongly indicative sanction, of the communicant to feed on the sacrifice by faith with thanksgiving. Just now I can but refer you to Exodus xii. 46, which enjoins that the flesh of Christ our Passover *shall not be carried out of the house; i. e.*, shall not be carried forth and away from the covering and warranting blood sprinkled upon the door-posts. The blood, the blood, is ever the basis of our worship, our service, our peace, our hope, our love, our joy, our strength, our endurance, and our *rest in God*.

"A-Dieu! I commend to your earnest pondering the five articles (or provisions) of that excelling ministry—the ministration of the new covenant, of which our High Priest in the heavens has been constituted the Mediator."

"MEET FOR THE MASTER'S USE."

A COMMON and in itself commendable motive for much that is done in the way of Christian "service" is, that we may be of use to those around us. We shall be most helpful to all by *living out* that to which from day to day we have attained, that which each one of us has truly learned from God, not by doing this or that, but by ceasing from all the actings of *self*. This is a most momentous truth in the midst of the many mistaken,

sinful, condemnatory doings and teachings of the children of God (James iii. 1), themselves not yet taught that they that are in the flesh (which all are as respects each act done, except so far as it is truly not he or she that does it, but *Christ* that liveth in them, *self* having been crucified that He may live there) *cannot* please God, however much their outward religious works may take the form, and hold forth the appearance, of pleasing Him in their own eyes, and in the eyes of all. God is not so pleased, and cannot be. Only when the flesh is dead can anything be done by the redeemed one which can be acceptable to Him.

Again, the profiting of others is not the end of the Christian’s life. He lives to obey, and to please, and to glorify God. This is his whole and his only aim; and this casts condemnation on all the strivings and actings of the uncrucified old man within, even with a view to benefiting the world, or the people of God, or for any other object, apart from direct obedience to the command of God. My place being to obey God, and in all things to consult His mind, not my own, and this not in words and admissions, but in very deed and truth moment by moment; my walk and my doings are a right walk and right doings only so far as I am able at all times to say—I am walking thus, and I am doing this, because I have God’s direction to do it. It is no question whether others may or may not have such direction, and it is not a question whether I myself may or may not have been so directed at other times or in the general; it is essential, if I would be walking otherwise than in the lawless rebellion before God, which is natural to all of us, and never ceases till self is truly put to death, though it has specious ways of hiding its deformity and darkness under the cloak even of religious devotedness, that I individually should, at this moment, and at each moment, have God’s direct command to me for that which I am doing; otherwise it would indeed be well for me to cease from my so-

called service. Living thus, I shall be a true blessing to others. Living to God, I cannot but be helpful to all. If I act at His command, it will be He that acts through me; and He acts not in vain, although all His children's well-meant actings without Him are worse than vain. If, again, I abstain from acting, because I have no authority from Him to act, my abstaining, my quiet, my rest, my subjection, my discipline in my own inner soul through this needed stillness before God, will in like manner be fruitful in blessings to others, whether by its operation directly on them, or by that which it brings forth for them in me. If it be no longer *I*, the restless evil self, but *HE*, then whether doing, or ceasing from doing, He can but be The Good One, who doeth good, the Fountain of blessings.

Askest thou, dear child of God, how am I thus from hour to hour to get direction from my Father? How am I thus to hear His voice? How shall I distinguish it from my own reasonings and judgment, and from my own spirit's suggestings? And shall I not be made over to a life of unprofitable inactivity, if I yield myself up, never more to move, except as immediately moved of God? The full and *satisfying* answer, thou must look to God to give. It is not thy intelligence that is to be first satisfied; it is in thy soul's experience that thou wilt receive the answer first. The first step is to cease from *thyself*, and to *trust God*. Is it not because thou hast never truly trusted Him, never had sufficient confidence in Him to commit thyself sincerely and unreservedly to His disposal, that thou hast been so full of doings for which thou hast had no commission directly and assuredly from Him, and that thou art now so unable to trust thyself in simplicity to His guidance? Be not afraid at once to look to the springs of all that thou art engaged in, and to withdraw from everything, however excellent it may appear and be reputed by all, for which thou wilt not be able before the judgment-seat of Christ to say unwaveringly that

thou thyself didst receive His mandate and His authority to act.

Thy first work is to unlearn all this evil, this insubjection to God, which is the evil root from whence springs all fleshly service, as well ‘as all fleshly sloth. *The axe must be laid to the root of this evil tree.* Be a restless pleaser of thyself no more. Recognize at length that thou canst not by any of thy workings work the works of God; but that it must be verily He that worketh in thee, and through thee, anything that is not to be for judgment. “Cease to do evil,” and *then* thou mayest begin to “learn to do well.” Will not *He* teach who is as a *Father that pitieth His children?* Will not a humble, reverent waiting upon Him till He shall speak be far more blessed than all carnal uncommanded works? Will not the God of all grace, who yearns to find among His children one here and there who will be like Christ, the emptied One, delight, when thou art emptied, if thou wilt let Him make thee so, to fill thee with Himself?

And cannot He that made the ear speak to it? Cannot He so speak that thou shalt need no further assurance of His mind? Is it His purpose that His child, made at length, under His gracious hand, truly willing to do His will, should now be left to suffer a doubt of any kind what His will is?

WAIT *on the Lord.* Move not a step till He instructs. Recognize all movement by thee, without His express direction to thyself, as the very sin in all its fulness which brought ruin on this world. Thou wilt then have no occasion to complain, that He who has made all “lawlessness” (*ἀνομία*—1 John iii. 4), insubjection, self-pleasing, the running unspent, the doing of anything unbidden by Him, to be that “sin,” leaves thee unable to ascertain His mind, and thus makes sin a necessity to thee. “He that is willing to do *His* will (first mortifying and ceasing from his own) shall *know.*” Thou wilt enter on a path of crucifixion to the flesh in

its fairest forms and manifestations; thou wilt probably be called to cease from much Cain-offering which thou hast hitherto self-complacently assumed to be of a sweet savour to God; thou wilt begin to learn that to do the works of God is to believe on Him whom He hath sent, to live the life of faith. Thou wilt begin to learn what that means—"He that believeth shall not make haste." Thou wilt find this discipline to be indeed the entering in through the *strait* gate, and the walking in the *narrow* way; and, by a daily dying to a self before unrecognized in its subtlest activities, thou wilt obtain access into "the secret of the Lord," and be truly blessed.

PERFECT RELIGION—WHAT IS IT?

PERFECT religion is to the soul what the soul is to the body. The soul animates the whole person; it sees through the eye, hears through the ear, tastes through the mouth, handles through the hands, talks through the tongue, reflects through the brain. The whole body is moved and regulated by an impulse from within.

Let "pure religion" take full possession of the soul, and it will be found to actuate all its movements, and direct all its powers. There will be no violent efforts; no stiffness, no awkwardness. All will be natural and easy. An unseen and gentle influence will pervade the whole mind and regulate the whole conduct, and thus the creature will gradually become conformed to the image of his Creator.

For Thee, my Lord, I'd labour and I'd live;
 For Thee I'd spend my every passing hour;
 Myself, my time, my talents I would give—
 A witness of Thy love's constraining power.

Shine on me, then, thou Sun of Righteousness!
 Beneath Thy beams let all the fruits of grace
 Grow to Thy glory, while I forward press
 To that dear home where I shall see Thy face.

SALVATION, SERVICE, ASSOCIATION.

III. GOLD, SILVER, AND PRECIOUS STONES.

1 Cor. iii. 9-12.

THE third division of this subject introduces us to the thought of association. There have been in all ages saints of God on earth; but until the present period they were not organized into a united corporation or society.

From Adam to Moses there were as brilliant gems of spiritual attainment as any that have shone in the Church of God; but they were not associated as saints with one another in a body.

In Israel also, amid multitudes who called Abraham their father, there were here and there not a few who, "being of faith, were blessed with faithful Abraham" (Gal. iii. 9); but they were isolated as regards one another. The only connecting link revealed in those days was that of common nationality, which, be it remembered, linked together the true with the false in a common profession.

But now it is otherwise. Nations God has ceased to own; yes, even for a time His own people Israel; but *saints* out of every nation are "by one Spirit baptized into one body," to be in this united state the glory of God by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. (Eph. iii. 21.)

And not only hereafter, but here below also, God has so arranged for the visible incorporation of saints in church communion, that He may "make all men see what is the fellowship" of this hitherto unknown association, which, nevertheless, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in Himself. (Eph. ii. 9.)

Ephesians gives us the heavenly, Corinthians, the earthly description of this beautiful and glorious conception of divine wisdom.

To that part of it which is brought out in 1 Cor. iii. I have now to refer briefly.

As is the heavenly pattern of Ephesians i. ii. iii. iv., so should be the earthly counterpart.

Nought but gold, and silver, and precious stones in the one,* there should be only these in the other.

The living, elect, and precious foundation stone is laid by God, and none in the name of Christianity can lay another foundation. But the danger was then, and is now, of "*building thereupon*" those who have no proper claim or right to a place in the temple of God; in other words, of introducing into the earthly tabernacle souls that have no place in the heavenly and eternal temple

In houses of men's building there is always "wood," and often thatch of hay and stubble, and they are correspondingly perishable. In God's there is to be nought but "gold, and silver, and precious stones," which no lapse of ages can destroy.

Therefore, "let every man take heed how he buildeth;" for certain it is, that whoever, on any pretext, introduces into church fellowship those of whom he

* There is an interpretation of this passage which may demand reference. It says, the gold, and silver, and stones, wood, hay, and stubble, are doctrines—good and bad doctrines—or else actions, good and bad. But the context forbids this meaning; for the allegory opens with the words, "Ye are God's building;" that is, the saints are God's building. It says not, "The truth or a holy life is God's building;" and in verse 16, "Ye are the temple of God." How evidently the figure is the same as that of 1 Peter ii. 5, "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house;" of Eph. ii. 20, 22, "Ye are built upon the foundation," &c.; "Ye are builded together;" and of 2 Cor. vi. 16, "Ye are the temple of the living God." While as to "wood, hay, and stubble," that they are the unconverted professors is shown by the analogy of Matt. iii. 12, "the chaff;" Matt. xiii. 38, "The tares are the children of the wicked one;" and of this passage (1 Cor. iii.) itself. As the foundation stone is a person, not a doctrine or an action, so the superstructure must be persons, not doctrines or actions. And how could doctrines or actions be burned? But burning is always the doom of the unbeliever.

has not good reason to believe that they are "living stones" in Christ defiles, or (as Dr. Alford translates it) *mars* the temple of God, and as to reward of service hereafter, he shall be correspondingly marred. Man cannot "destroy" the temple of God, neither will God destroy his erring servants. He shall certainly be saved if he have personal faith in the Son of God; but his wood and stubble, that by carelessness or erroneous teaching he has gathered round him, "shall be burned."

This is the prophetic doom of this great Christendom that such work has made—"The fire shall try" it, and with "flaming fire" the Stone, which a great majority of the builders have even for themselves rejected, while they built up wood and stubble, shall come forth as the "head of the corner," and burn up this chaff with unquenchable fire, purging out alike the false builders and the false professors, and, gathering the precious and living stones around His feet, He will manifest before the admiring universe the holy temple of the Lord, God's eternal habitation.

In the meantime our responsibility is, so far as in us lies, to withhold fuel from that fire; to resist and oppose with all our might the accumulation in church association of such perishable and doomed materials; to revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish which are to be burned (Neh. iv. 2), the "living stones," the "silver" and the "gold," and to bring them together into a "holy communion," corresponding, if only in a little, yet in a little, with that future and eternal union to which we are called in Christ.

The Lord prayed before He left us "that they all may be one; . . . that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." How evident it is, then, that this living unity was not by Him intended merely as a heavenly display hereafter. For then the time will be past of the world's *believing*, and the time of *knowing* shall have come. (John xvii. 23.)

But more. See Ephesians iii., where not only are "all men" to see this holy fellowship, but even "principalities and powers in heavenly places," are to be able, looking down to earth, to see therein an exhibition for their study and admiration of the "manifold wisdom of God."

But, alas! what do men and angels see? *Confusion*. There are confederations, associations, denominations, it is true. But who makes them? whence spring they? and what are they composed of? Made by men, sprung from earth, and composed chiefly of wood, and hay, and stubble, while "God's building" of true saints is in ruins. His heavenly creation of the Spirit's baptism, the one body of Christ, though still on earth, can be seen but in fragments; and the gold, the silver, and the precious stones, are either hidden in the rubbish and dust, or only found in twos and threes, gathering where they may in weakness, and waiting for the promised term of this saddest of all human failures.

But then, oh, lift up your drooping heads, my brothers—then, what a glorious day! When dust shall leap from its dust, and the slumbering virgins shall awake to greet the coming footsteps; when, at the sound of the archangelic trump, all the precious fragments of the shattered building shall arise and come together, and names but little known on earth, or known but to be contemned, shall be aloud proclaimed and honoured before the Father and His holy angels; when the rejected and dishonoured Stone shall come forth with shoutings of "Grace! grace unto it!" and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the glorious pile of the Almighty Architect, the temple and habitation of God, shall stand complete and eternal in the heavens. Not a little stone, not a vessel shall be wanting. On each piece of gold and silver the King's image shall stand out in strong, ineffaceable relief, and on the High Priest's breast and on His shoulders the precious stones shall glitter; His ornament to wear them, their glory to be worn.

THE CHURCH OF PHILADELPHIA.

PART II.

“BECAUSE thou hast kept the word of my patience:”—the word of Christ which inculcates and strengthens patience, by holding out the exceeding great and eternal recompence which He will give for every act of obedience, or endurance, or self-denying love. The patience of hope, the patient continuance in well-doing, the patient waiting for Christ, will all have their abundant reward. “The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.” And our Father’s word to us is—“Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”

Our God is emphatically the “God of patience.” Patient forbearing grace marks all His dealings, and He would have us be imitators of Him as dear children.

We have “need of patience,” and patience must be fed and sustained by faith—a faith which rests on the steadfast word of the living God, which lives in the future, and grasps the things which are eternal. Faith looks onward to the bright reward, and thus we get patience to suffer persecution for Christ’s sake. Faith counts on the blessed results of affliction, as sent by a Father’s hand to purge and perfect, and thus patience is strengthened to endure. Faith also rests in God’s eternal purpose concerning His people, and knows that He not only forgives, but will eventually subdue their iniquities; and thus we get increased patience to bear with the flesh in our fellow-Christians, and are enabled, as labourers together with God, in all meekness and gentleness, to labour for their blessing, and seek to help and strengthen them.

The Philadelphian Christians *kept* the word of His patience. They fixed their eyes upon the future, and

waited for the coming of Christ; and see what a promise they gain: "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

While this promise holds out the hope that the Church of Christ will be taken to be with Him *before* the great tribulation in the days of Antichrist, and will be kept from that special time of temptation and trial, does it not also point out to us a principle of constant application? Does it not teach us that if we would stand in time of temptation, or rather be so sheltered as to prevent its touching or injuring us, we must dwell above instead of *upon* the earth?

In the Psalms we read much of this blessed place of shelter—"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." Again, "Thou art my hiding-place;" and again, "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man; thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues;" and, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

"So safe, so calm, so satisfied,
The soul that clings to Thee!"

There is verily a refuge from temptation and trial—a place where our souls may lie down without fear (see Job xi. 18, 19), and where no evil can touch us (see Job v. 19-24). *There*, and there only, shall we be kept from the hour of temptation, and prove that we are more than conquerors through Him that loves us.

Are we dwellers upon earth? Are we minding earthly things? Are our affections set on things below? Then we shall find ourselves exposed to the full storm of temptation. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, will lead us captive, and everything around and within will disturb our souls, and hinder our fellowship with Christ.

But to those whose affections are set above, like the

Philadelphians, there is given another word of cheer: "Behold, I come quickly." Only a little while. Be strong and of a good courage; "hold that fast which thou hast;" firmly grasp it, for the thief is nigh; he comes to rob thee of thy treasure; hold it fast, "that no one take thy crown."

Christ has a crown prepared; a crown which He will give when He appears; a crown, the mark of His approval, the token of the joy which He has found in our obedience. How precious such a crown! Not valued for its beauty, nor for the glory which it gives; but precious as the gift of Him we love, the proof of His delight in us, the eternal memento of how He prized and treasured up our feeble efforts to serve and follow Him.

"That no one take thy crown." He longs to give the crown. He would not have us forfeit it. What joy it will be to Him to call His loved ones round Him, and say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!" What joy to speak to each of all their service here—to tell aloud their secret acts of love, their unknown sacrifice for Him! His heart is set upon that day of recompense; He speaks of it continually; He seems to love to dwell upon it; and who can tell the glad surprise which then awaits us? the rich and varied joys He has prepared for all His blood-bought ones?

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God:"—not merely a stone, but a pillar sustaining others. Surely this is present as well as future. We read of "James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars;" and who would not wish to be a pillar, supporting the weak, and comforting the feeble-minded?

"The temple of my God:"—the Church of the living God, a habitation of God through the Spirit. No building made with hands, but a living temple of living stones, instinct with life, and love, and holiness; a temple meet for Him; a habitation worthy of God.

Glorious, amazing truth indeed it is, that wretched, ruined sinners, when washed in the blood of Christ, created anew in Him, and formed and fashioned by the Spirit of God, should be prepared and destined for such honour and glory!

“And he shall go no more out.” How prone are we to wander! How prone to turn aside from Christ! How easily are we deterred by difficulties, and turned from our path of service to the Lord by the ingratitude and selfishness of others! And yet how certain the fact, that if a pillar fall, it will not fall alone, but many stones will be displaced as well! and sadly, solemnly true is this in the Church of God. Then what is our safeguard? We must be overcomers, keeping the word of His patience, looking onwards to the crown, and then we shall have strength to bear the weight which must press upon us, if we are pillars in the temple of our God.

“And I will write upon Him the name of my God.” “It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him;” and then will the universe behold us as the children of our blessed God, whom He loves and delights to honour. But even now His name may be written upon us, and we *should* be manifested as those belonging to God—the likeness of our Father stamped upon us (see Matt. v. 44, 45), His name written upon our foreheads, and shining out in our lives.

“I will write:”—yes, Christ Himself will write upon us. He loves to mark and own us as His own. With exceeding joy will He present us before the throne of His glory above; and *now*, if we yield ourselves to Him, and suffer Him to grave His name upon us, He joys over us with singing; yea, rests in His love (Zeph. iii. 17), and in measure sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. Who would not seek thus to refresh and gladden our beloved Lord?

“And the name of the city of my God, which is

New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God." Yes, indeed! There will be no mistake in that glorious day. No earth-marks will remain upon us. We shall be manifested as the citizens of heaven, the chosen companions of Christ, and the peculiar treasure of our God and Father. And shall we not plainly declare our citizenship *now*, in the midst of those who are minding earthly things? Shall not the pilgrim character be stamped upon us like those of old who confessed they were strangers, who would not go back though they had opportunity, and of whom it is said that God, the God whose presence they thus preferred, was not ashamed to be called their God, for He had prepared for them a city? Shall we not manifest that the world with all its glittering gew-gaws has lost its charm for us?

"We've no abiding city here,
We seek a city yet to come."

Our hopes, our joys, our love, our all is *there*, and onward we are pressing, counting what others value dross, and reckoning all trouble light, because of the exceeding bliss which waits us there.

"And I will write upon him my new name." May we not say in the words of the hymn—

"His new, best name of love?"

It is in JESUS we learn the love of God. HE has manifested and unfolded it. That deep, unutterable love, which was pent up in the heart of God, now flows forth in its fulness. The cross of Christ has made a channel for its bounteous streams; and as we gaze on Jesus, sit at His feet, and listen to Him, we learn somewhat of that rich and precious love, and joyfully declare—

"O Lord, thy love's unbounded;
So vast, so full, so free!
My soul is all transported,
Whene'er I think of Thee!"

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” Oh, for the hearing ear, the seeing eye, the understanding heart! An ear attent to hear His voice, and a heart quick to do His will; then shall we know the true blessedness of these glorious promises, and be abundantly satisfied with the rich-provision of our Father’s house.

“Yes, sure, if in Thy presence
 My soul still constant were,
 Mine eye would, more familiar,
 Its brighter glories bear;
 And thus Thy deep perfections
 Much better should I know,
 And with adoring fervour
 In this Thy nature grow.”

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS.

Continued from page 248.

WRITING of marriage, he thus expresses himself: “And now the proposed day for your union before the Lord draweth nigh. May all your hopes and fears, all your forecastings and exercises, respecting this greatest of earth’s concernments concur to form that ‘preparation of heart’ which will sanctify it, and confirm your souls in your consecration to God, ‘the only good and the only wise,’ the rightful claimant of all your homage and allegiance, and of the service of all your powers. I warmly congratulate you both, and to both I commend the grave and spiritual—grave and spiritual, that it may be made practical—pondering of Proverbs xxxi. 10–31.”

“The notes about Melchisedec are sound and good; you might, I think, descant upon them. What instruction is conveyed in *his* bringing forth *bread and wine*? Again, in the furnishing of bread and wine by the Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ, is not the advertence rather to the resurrection aliment and

atoning blood than to the subsequent ministrations of cleansing, and restoring, and adorning, and conforming, and perfecting “unto the measure of the stature of His fulness,” which constitute mainly the function (not of the expiator of sin, but) of the High Priest over the house? What is the significance of Melchisedec receiving tithes,—and from Abraham? You say, ‘The priestly office of the Lord Jesus Christ begins in resurrection life.’ Certainly, but how many thousand divines are ignorant of this, concurring to teach that He was Prophet, Priest, and King on earth, and now is in the heavens? But you add, ‘He (as Priest) brings forth the bread and wine.’ How? in what ordinance or ministration? with what significance? and to what end? You say, ‘He reaps the joy,’ &c. ‘He sees of the travail of His soul,’ &c. Is He not rather ‘waiting,’ ‘expecting?’ glorified, indeed, in His own person, but afflicted and held fast in humiliation in His members?

“You say, ‘the Melchisedec Priesthood is the substance’ Where is the authority for this interpretation of the Melchisedec and Aaronic priest-hoods—this identification of the two as dawn and full glory—as type and antitype?”

“‘Better testament.’ Do you indeed read ‘testament’ here (and elsewhere) instead of ‘covenant.’ How greatly this must affect the whole mystery of the *dying* of the Son of God! If there be consistency respectively in the holding of these two views, what conflicting interpretation must there be of some hundreds of Scriptures?”

“By ‘them that come unto God by Him:’—you understand, I suppose, not sinners now believing in God through Jesus Christ, but saints coming in prayer, praise, and other exercises of worship, to the heavenly Father.”

“Truth taught by the Spirit of God warms indeed, and prompts, and moves, but yet it *calms*; it confers or confirms self-possession; it forms or it fixes purpose; but yet it directs to the Lord, and bestows the power of waiting—ah! the unfleshly power of *waiting*. Wait, oh, wait! When the Lord stirs the soul, He surely enlightens the understanding; when the Lord addresses and commands the conscience, He surely purifies and guides it. ‘The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and to them will He shew His covenant.’ ‘The meek will He guide in judgment.’ ‘His secret is with the righteous.’

“Promptitude to run at the bidding of the Lord is good—oh, how good! But let not either of two things be mistaken for it—either the ardour, vigour, and alacrity of *nature*, or the self-sufficiency and precipitancy of the *flesh*. These cases (you mention), if they may be, may also not be precedents or examples for you. ‘They that desire to do His will shall know His will.’ ‘If a man walk in the day (in the light as God is in the light), he stumblcth not, because he seeth the light.’ The voice of the Lord is often ‘a still small voice,’ audible, well audible, to the listening soul. Harken for it through all the hurricane, the earthquake, and the fire. ‘Stand upon thy watch; set thyself upon the tower; watch, and see what He shall say to thee.’ ‘The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.’”

For nearly two years before he died, he was suffering from sickness under which many less vigorous in constitution than he would have given way. At the end of 1870 he thus writes:—“I have been a close prisoner above twelve weeks. The Lord, even the Lord, *my* Lord, has laid this affliction upon me; upon Him I wait for the removal of it. If the Lord be a Father, let us render unto Him honour; if a Master, fear; let us accept and let us rejoice in His will.”

Speaking of a portion of a letter at the close of the year, telling him that no fresh covenant had been made (as is often the case with young believers), he writes:—"Well and wisely have you acted in refraining from entering into 'a fresh or personal covenant with God.' We may be well satisfied with our inclusion under that covenant which is eternal. All its articles are mercies, and all are well ordered and sure. *Laus Deo.*"

Again in March, 1871, he writes:—"Dearest,—Blessed are the loving; more blessed indeed is the subject of love than the object. My illness is extreme. The physician comes and goes powerless. . . . My sleep is not simply scanty, but actively agitating and distressing. 'He giveth His beloved sleep.' Ah! truly; yet in the measure dictated by His wisdom. The mind of our God concerning us is, not refreshing repose of our bodies, but our holiness. Our holiness as ingenerated by the inshining and inworking of *His* holiness. Hallelujah! Orthodoxy teaches that God seeks glory from His redeemed. A praise—a lustre—a magnification. Surely, but God's deeper, stronger, heartier, even *personal* (not official, not as sovereign, not as the sole potentate) seeking is, that His redeemed be a delight, a portion, a treasury, a substantive, complete and acquired possession—a SATISFACTION." (See Eph. i. and Heb. xii.)

Later in 1871 he wrote:—"How blessed and how encouraging the prospect of soon entering (I say, not into the rest and into the joy of the blessed, but) into the presence and into the embrace of Him who hath so loved, and who will through all eternity love! Such." He ceased abruptly, as though the contemplation was too much for him.

In January, 1872, he wrote:—"You have obtained from your loving Father the truly highest, even the *exquisite* enjoyments of this earthly life, and you have

obtained with them those crosses and bafflings, those troubles and trials (1 Cor. x. 13), which alone could sanctify them, and simplify them as blessings. You are *now* undergoing distress, and apprehension of greater; yet it is good, and only good, which you are expecting from the heart and hand of your God. The . . . doctors will restore and heal if they be heavenly appointed; but the one word ever is, 'I am the Lord who healeth.'

"Your reasoning upon the *power* and the *will* (or counsel) of God in restoring or in restraining His healing hand is surely just. Of God's will (or counsel) we have no knowledge. His ultimate aim, or His comprehensive aim, or a certain subordinate or independent aim, we may conjecture; but even this, observe, is not *knowledge*; for who of man can entertain all the considerations pertaining to a purpose so as to weigh and decide upon it? Nay. God's paths are in the deep; His footsteps are not known. *Esto!** Pray, unceasingly pray, and in prayer have a desire or a will, even a strong desire or will, and hold it and plead it until instructed otherwise To pray, and to pray without ceasing, is natural, normal, reasonable, &c., as well as commanded—'Naturam expellas furcâ tamen usque recurret?' †

He was taken to be with God, July 13th, 1872, calmly sleeping into rest. His last words murmured were, "Precious God, thy will be done."

Born 1795. Died 1872. He walked with God over 60 years. "Let me (live the life, and) die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

Thine eyes are beholding the King in His beauty;
Thine ears are attuned to new songs of renown;
Thy one great delight is His will and His glory;
He carried *Thy* sorrows, thou wearest *His* crown.

* Be it so.

† Though you drive out nature with a club, yet will she always return.

REFUGE AND REST.

A WORD FOR MOTHERS.

“The sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God.”—Ps. lxxxiv. 3.

“THE *sparrow* hath found an *house*!” “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?”—so lightly are they esteemed, so little valued—“Yet, not *one* of them is forgotten before God.” “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me.” “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, to set him among princes.”

“And the swallow a nest for herself”—not a *house*, for the swallow is a bird of passage, and must hasten onward. This world is not the heavenly pilgrim’s house, so she must not settle down in it. She needs but a place for repose when weary in her journey toward that “better country,” where shines the “Sun of Righteousness.” She is a “stranger and sojourner,” like Him whom she loves and follows. Yet *unlike* Him, for “the Son of man had not where to lay His head;” while *she* has a wondrous place of repose, which HE in deep and matchless love has *designed* for her, and which is symbolized by the nest which the swallow seems to have “found” by accident. Ah, what it cost Him to prepare that place of refuge!

He speaks of her as “My dove—in the clefts of the Rock.” “That Rock was Christ.” (1 Cor. x. 4.) “Jesus saith unto them, ‘Peace be unto you:’ and when He had so said, He shewed them His *hands* and His *side*. Then were the disciples *glad* when they saw the Lord.” “We which have believed do *enter into rest*.” He wooed and won the trembling timid one by His grace at the first, and thus she tells her experience—

“I heard the voice of Jesus say,
‘Come unto me and rest;

Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
 Thy head upon my breast.
 I came to Jesus as I was,
 Weary, and worn, and sad;
 I found in Him a resting-place,
 And He has made me glad."

And it is ever "a rest that *remaineth*." Having once taken refuge there, once having found that "sweet resting-place of every heart that knows the plague of sin," it has become her *own*. "A nest for herself," to which she may come at her pleasure; nay, more—He who said to the toiling disciples of old, "Come ye yourselves apart, and rest awhile," Himself their rest and refreshing, again and again presses upon her labouring spirit the invitation—"Come unto me, and I will give you rest;" and, that none may disturb her, says to those around, "I charge you, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love until she please."

"Where she may lay her *young*" also without rebuke, with every encouragement. "They brought young children to Him that *He* should *touch* them, and His disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not."

"Even thine *altars*." Not to one only, but to both may the privileged traveller, who "cometh up from the wilderness leaning on her Beloved," bring her little ones in faith. "It is the *altar* that *sanctifieth* the gift," and to the earnest Christian mother, mourning that she sees not as yet her darlings given, by their *own* act and deed, to God upon the altar *within* the tabernacle where only those born into the priestly family might go, how sweet is the sure word of promise—"Whatsoever *toucheth* the altar *shall* be holy!"

She has brought them in the arms of her faith to the brazen altar outside, the place where God appointed to meet with His *people* Israel, as well as the priests

(Ex. xxix. 42, 43), and there she may present them continually in the preciousness of the "continual burnt offering," and fully expect that sooner or later they shall "apprehend that for which *they are* apprehended of *Christ Jesus*." She may even hope that in their very earliest days they may, like the infant Samuel, begin to "minister to the Lord, being girded with a linen ephod." Having received the truth in the love of it, manifesting it thus early in their ways; in a holiness befitting their childish years and character; and, like the child Jesus, growing in wisdom as in stature, and in favour with God and man.

How this hope stirs and nerves her heart to faith and prayer *for* them! How it encourages her in her work of faith and labour of love *toward* them, though she may often have to "sow in tears" while speaking to them of sin and its consequences, and seeing not as yet any "repentance toward God, or faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ!" But she goes on in faith and patience, expecting fully to "reap in joy." She knows the natural mind is dark, and must be instructed as to its own condition; she shows them their need of atonement, and points them to the "Lamb of God which taketh away the *sin* of the world;" she tells them of their ruin and danger, and, "as beloved sons, *warns* them" to "flee from the wrath to come;" she pleads with them, "Escape for thy *life*!" and entreats them to make *their own* the sin-offering slain before their eyes, and continually reminds them that "without shedding of blood is no remission."

"In the place where they kill the *burnt* offering shall the *sin* offering be killed;" and while the mother who brings her children to God's altar, presents the sin offering to them, her own heart rests in the *burnt* offering; she presents *them* to God in *that*, and quietly says, "I know *whom* I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

THE WORK OF FAITH.

"We pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power."—2 THESS. i. 11.

God's purpose in creating man was that He might have joy in him. His delights were with the sons of men; He walked with him in Eden; He made one like unto Himself, in His likeness, that He might commune with him. What creature can conceive the joy which He who is love thus provided for Himself, or His sorrow at its loss?

To have fallen from this blessed place and condition is man's ruin; to be restored to it is man's salvation, and the object of God's heart. And God's message therefore is, "Return! Return!" "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal you." "Return unto me, for I have redeemed thee."

All that falls short of the restoration of this holy, happy intimacy with God falls short of His salvation. It is for this that He has paid the price of our redemption—that He has not spared His own beloved Son. His object is to make us "partakers of the divine nature," sons and daughters of the living God, not in name, but by this true and real, present, conscious, and abiding participation in His own blessed nature, by a birth from above, yea, to make us one in the Father and the Son, as they are one.

The agency by which this amazing restoration is brought about is the working of the Holy Spirit, the gift of the ascended Saviour, who moves, and works, and carries on His work to completion (if not hindered) by *faith*, which, in common with the whole provision for this wondrous end, is the gift of God.

"He that believeth in Him is not condemned."
 "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life."
 "He that believeth on me shall never thirst." "He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers

of living water." "Whosoever liveth and believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to my Father."

Is this supernatural, transforming power some mere conviction of the understanding; some assent of the intelligence to a history and record of facts and events which happened eighteen hundred years ago; or some belief in statements of truth, in doctrines, in ordinances?

Yet further, is it a believing once for all—a *door* only to be once passed through, and not a *way* along which I must every moment walk? Is it a faith which was once given me in time past, in that name which is above every name—a faith which then and there fully wrought out this marvellous transformation, so that thenceforward nothing more remained to be effected?

The answers which the Scriptures of truth give to these momentous questions—answers on which hang results of unspeakable and eternal importance—demand surely all the intentness and earnestness, engagedness and subjection of spirit, of which the child of God is capable.

First, then, the faith or believing that saves the soul is a faith of THE HEART. The enemy of God, still in his sins, can believe with his intellect the historical relation of the life and death of Christ equally with the reconciled one who follows the Lamb; yea, the very devils can and do thus believe, and tremble. The faith which is of God, and by which He works salvation, is a faith which has its root and source in the deepest springs of the heart, wrought upon by a heavenly sense of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. The head may know little, and may err in many things; but the heart must be right with God; He must be its object, truly and really. His gracious demand, "My son, *give me thy heart,*" must have been truly met. Little may be known, but what is known

will, by the divine alchemy, be converted into material to feed the flame of love in the heart; while the possession of all knowledge, and the understanding of all mysteries, only fills and puffs up the unsanctified mind with visions, delusions, and dreams, to its condemnation. The loving heart may know little, but will yet have its inmost feelings and affections drawn out and engaged as it looks on Him who, for its deliverance from eternal woe, shed His precious blood on the tree; while the wisdom which apprehends, and can discourse on, and teach others all this, may *feel* nothing. So that herein is solved the mystery, that "God hath chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom;" that to the poor the gospel was preached, and they heard it gladly; and that God, who is love, whose heart yearns over every one of His lost creatures, has yet hid these things from the wise and prudent,—teachers, preachers, leading scribes and Pharisees, and rulers of the people,—and revealed them unto *babes*. Herein also may be learned how it is that "with *the heart* man believeth unto righteousness," and, in a large measure, how the first shall be last, and the last first; how there are many called, but few chosen.

Secondly. The true faith is always and necessarily *operative* by the operation of God. Every smallest grain of that which is begotten of God in the heart *works*; the faith wrought by Him is "faith that *worketh by love*," that "*overcometh* the world."

The faith which is the gift of God is a living faith, because it proceeds from Him who is the fountain of life, the living God. Power is as inseparable from it as heat from the sun, because "it stands in the power of God." By this it is that the one who has it—the weak, the emptied one, the one as good as dead, the one who no longer glories in the flesh, or tries to serve God by it—can do all things through Christ strengthening him.

He can do all things, because true faith can act only at the command of God; and what the Omnipotent commands, He Himself works through the honoured instrument fitted by His own humbling discipline for the Master's gracious use. In this life and power it stands in vivid contrast with another "faith" which man may generate (may this most solemn truth be pondered on), which Paul took heed not to generate (1 Cor. ii.); but which, it must be feared, Christians are largely generating in these days by resort to that which Paul shunned, "excellency of speech," and "persuasive words of man's wisdom;" a *faith* (note that it is so designated) standing "in the wisdom of man." This faith the Scriptures describe as "dead." It proceeds from the dead, from the learning and eloquence, and earthly wisdom and rhetorical arts, of the preacher acting on the natural fears, and hopes, and affections, and emotions, and religious feelings of the sinful creature; and, as like can but produce like, these dead things produce the dead, the earthly produces the earthly. This is a faith which will, perhaps, despise all true working for God, and to which all such works are absolutely impossible. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith and have not works? Can faith save him?" "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

A word of counsel may be needed here with respect to dangers in opposite directions. If we would see anything as it is seen by the eye of truth, we must go to Him who alone has the eye-salve, that He may apply it to our eyes and make us to see; otherwise we shall see nothing but riches and increase of goods, when, truly, all is wretchedness, misery, poverty, blindness, and nakedness. For it must not be supposed that this natural faith confesses itself unable to bring forth works, and makes no endeavour to have a show of them. The danger of mistake would be unspeak-

ably less if it were so; as it is, it is great indeed, for the "dead" faith may be followed by "dead works" abundant. It may be full of religiousness of the flesh, and the doings which spring from this source may well pass for works, unless the wisdom of the Allwise be looked for to preserve from the wiles of the deceitful one.

A dead faith again may abound with knowledge, even of the things of God; and knowledge may seem to "work," as indeed it does. The thirst for it at the beginning—to be as gods, and know good and evil—has wrought unutterable woe for man; and this is its usual fruit still, though it is highly esteemed on all sides, in all sections of the "Church." Yet, "knowledge puffeth up," inflates, works as a ferment, as leaven, ordinarily; yea, almost always, while "love buildeth up." The carnal mind in the Christian, as well as elsewhere, is enmity against God; and if our desire truly is to "*become as little children*"—by which way alone the Lord has told us we can enter into the kingdom of heaven—we shall yearn rather to love than to know.

On the other hand, the estimate formed by the carnal apprehension which looketh at the outward appearances is so opposed to that of God, who looketh at the heart, that we are in extreme danger, in these days of abounding, self-willed activities, of setting down the true work of God-begotten faith in His hidden ones as sloth and utter failure to work at all. It is a solemn question for each one of us who is doing anything which man may reckon as work for God, whether our estimate respecting Mary and Martha would have been the same as the Lord's, or directly opposed to it. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." Truly the work of faith is not sloth. God will be the only eye-witness of much of that inner travail and crucifixion, whereby all that would set itself up against Him, please itself, and

“work” for itself, is gradually brought low and made subject to Christ; but unspeakably precious in His sight is work such as this, and He will acknowledge it when much that now seems to overshadow it by imposing appearance and visible results will be disapproved and judged. (1 Cor. ix.) Have we faith to *wait* upon God; faith to be able to sit still in trustful, loving, patient, happy, quiet of soul till He from time to time speaks? Can we *trust Him* to tell us what He would have us to do, our sufficient discipline meantime being to take heed that our attitude of spirit ever is, “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth”? Is there not in this holy, patient waiting the true trial of faith, the very discipline which our lawless spirits most need? And do we not escape this work of faith, and patience, and subjection, whenever on any errand, however good in itself, we run, as we are so prone to run, unspent?

Thirdly. The faith which stands in the power of God, and endures “to the saving of the soul” (Heb. x. 30), is an abiding faith. It knows no “drawing back,” and still less is it a process, or work, once for all accomplished, when the love of Christ first warmed the heart, and thenceforward to be reckoned as a thing of the past. It was then that the germ only was implanted of that life which is to grow up and increase, and spread abroad, and bring forth fruit, if He who gave it be waited on to bring it to maturity. That was the beginning of that salvation which the redeemed one is to work out with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God that worketh in him to will and to do of His good pleasure. It was the first breath of a life which can be maintained only by a continuous breathing. There may be times of weakness and times of strength; but there can be no time on earth in which, in the child of God, faith comes to an end; for to cease to breathe is to die. The work of God, where it has been begun, must be carried on to completion, and true

faith, like the path of the just, of which it is the strength and support, will be as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Most disastrous therefore, among the many pitfalls of these perilous times, is the preaching of a faith which, unlike all the figures employed to image it, is perfect and complete at the moment of its birth, is a tree when it is but a seed, or needs not the life-long care and culture, that, standing ever under the beams of the Sun of Righteousness and watered with the dew of heaven, it may germinate, and grow, and increase with the increase of God. Not more destructive is the preaching of a salvation by a man's own works, than the preaching of a salvation which by necessary implication leaves the recipient at liberty to sin that grace may abound.

The "faith" and "believing" to which all the exceeding great and precious promises of God are indissolubly linked is no passing state, or stage, or operation, but the beginning, when it has truly commenced, of a new creation, of that inner, heavenly life which is to grow up into Christ. The first day's work here, as in the outward, is the first command of God, "Let there be light," and there is light. The work of the other days remains to be carried on until all is in God's sight "very good," and Christ, the second man from heaven "formed" in the believer, rules. Then will come the seventh day's rest, unless God's work is opposed and hindered, and made to fail (Matt. xiii. 58), but not before; so that the faith which is of God, instead of being some momentary action of the Spirit of God on the soul, is that enduring power of a heavenly life by which the Christian enters on the good fight of faith—a fight never to cease till no Canaanite shall any longer raise his head, till *David* shall reign (Acts vii. 45), till all enemies shall have been brought into subjection by Christ, and the kingdom within be delivered up to God, even the Father.

“HE THAT BELIEVETH,” then, is not some one who once, in time past, came under certain convictions, or went through certain feelings, or in whom merely some wondrous transformation was then wrought, so that as compared with the condition in which he had previously existed he might seem justified in holding that all things had become new. “He that believeth” is he who not merely once was, but now is, a believer; he who not merely once believed, but who is by habit and character a believing one; not one who is living in the recollection of some transient faith of past days, but one whose daily, hourly breath of life, moment by moment, is faith—believing—by which the inner man is sustained, the things that are seen made to vanish, and the blessed God so near, yet invisible, seen and communed with and revered. “He that believeth” is one who believes now and ever, as the living human being is not one who breathed in years gone by, but one who breathes at this moment. And thus is vindicated the truth of God, that he that believeth, out of his belly shall flow, and keep flowing, rivers of living water. The present never-failing spring sustains and insures the continuous outflow, though the channel can supply nothing of itself. Thus, too, it is that he that believeth will work, and continue working, the works of Christ, which are impossible to him who only once believed with a faith which stopped where it began. True faith is the accompaniment of union with Christ, and thus stands in “the power of an endless life.”

How far then, dear reader, hast thou, through this living faith, attained to that which is the only end for which it has been bestowed—true, living *communion* with God, having all things *in common with Him*, thy thoughts, thy desires, thy joys, thy sorrows? How far in thy hourly life is He Himself the One with whom thy whole heart is shared? How far is thy delight in holy intimacy with Him? How vain, and poor, and unworthy of a thought is all that does not help us to

return to this blessed intercourse with God! How high is this above all outward things!

Will it be suspected that here, as everywhere in our path, we are exposed to great peril, that a word of exhortation is truly needed, lest, when determined to forget all that is behind, and reach forth to that which is before, we still rest in those things which might be means, instead of passing through them, to have to do with GOD?

It is so. As the careless walker may readily make mistakes as to the *way* to be trodden, so may we easily err with respect to the *end* to be attained. Alas, it is a very common error to put outward observances, association with Christians, teachings, preachings, prayers, yea, the very study of the holy Scriptures themselves, in the place of the God of our life, in whom alone the soul can be satisfied. Yet of all these things, as of all else but Himself, it may be said that they perish in the using; that their only use is to lead the soul into true abiding communion with Him, into a sitting down to sup, not with man, but with Christ. Yea, let it be remembered with respect to those things which are unspeakably more excellent, even faith and hope, which are the precious fruits of the Spirit, that they, too, are but the scaffolding of the heavenly building, to be taken down when their purpose has been accomplished; that they will come to an end, and "cease" and "be done away" (1 Cor. xiii.); and that then nothing but the true, divine love of God in Christ will remain. We need to give the most earnest heed, therefore, that forms, and ordinances, and religious employments, are in very truth used only to build up this, not mis-used so as to be rested in, and so to shut out God.

Yes, dear fellow travellers, the momentous question with each one of us is, What is the measure of our LOVE of God?—not, what is our knowledge, or what is our goodness, or what are our doings? In comparison with our restoration to true, present, habitual fellow-

ship with Him all else is as nothing—gifts nothing, knowledge of truth and doctrines nothing, forms and ordinances, and outward worship and activities, nothing. Are we again walking with God as Adam walked before he fell, and Enoch after? Is it our joy to have had not so much truth made known to us, or so much service entered on, but the way into the very heart of God, which sin had closed, again opened up to us and blessed communion with Him restored and made our present enjoyment and possession? Is it for this that we live, and on this, and by this? Is it for this that we hunger and thirst, and pant, and long, and faint? Can we say with the man after God's own heart, "My soul thirsteth," not for the things of God, or the people of God, or the service of God, but "FOR GOD, FOR THE LIVING GOD?" If this be our inward state, all outward services *enjoined by God* will surely spring from it. If we cannot from our hearts speak thus we are deceived; we are missing the mark; we have turned into hindrances the things which should have been only helps; mistaken temporary and imperfect means for the eternal and satisfying end; have failed to reach to and lay hold of God's only end and provision for us—Himself, as our life, "the portion of our inheritance," our joy, our all.

To such His loving voice is still—"Return, return!" This is the true "*conversion*" that we need, the *life-long* "*turning*" away, in the power of His work within, from *all* besides, and the true union in our hearts, and affections, and lives, with Him who made us to be His own.

May grace be given to one here and there to turn away to Him from all the shadows and "weak and beggarly elements" of outward things! May there be some in Israel constrained to go down to David Himself in the hold, "in distress," and "discontented," till they are by His side, though all the glory of Israel would tempt them to be satisfied where He is not!

RIGHTNESS AND GOODNESS.

WHILST all the children of Adam are required to do what is right, it is only the children of God who are required—required because empowered—to do what is *good*. Rightness is conformity to justice or equity; *goodness* is conformity to the nature of God. Rightness is the perfectness of a moral being as moral, and it is obligatory on him; *goodness* is the perfectness of the moral being as begotten into union with the Son of God, and to him it is appropriate and decorous; it is harmony and beauty; it is grace and glory. Rightness, whether of action, or of will, or purpose, proceeds from the recognition of the authority of law; *goodness* flows from affections and desires, a spirit and a will made good—that is, rightness is prompted and produced by the force of law, and *goodness* is incited, and enkindled, and impelled forth by the ardour of love.

WALKING WITH GOD.

O LET me walk with Thee, Thou Mighty One!
 Lean on Thine arm, and trust Thy love alone;
 With Thee hold converse sweet where'er I go:
 Thy smile of love my highest bliss below!
 With Thee transact life's business—doing all
 With single aim for Thee—as Thou dost call:
 My every comfort at Thy hand receive,
 My every talent to Thy glory give;
 Thy counsel seek in every trying hour,
 In all my weakness trust Thy mighty power.
 O may this high companionship be mine,
 And all my life by its reflection shine!
 My great, my wise, my never-failing Friend,
 Whose love no change can know, no turn, no end!
 My SAVIOUR GOD! who gav'st Thy life for me,
 Let nothing come between my heart and Thee!

ON COMMUNION WITH GOD.

I. COMMUNION with God in *worship* is the highest blessing a saint can enjoy, and the greatest act he can perform, because it is founded upon an intimate knowledge, appreciation of, and delight in, the eternal, all-glorious, and infinitely perfect character of Jehovah.

II. Communion with God in *service* is the next highest blessing, and is founded on the knowledge of His will, and a willingness of heart and responsibility of conscience to obey it.

III. Communion with God in *prayer* is the next blessing in order and degree, and is founded on a sense of need, and the assurance of His hearing and readiness to answer the petitions presented.

An act of worship is an act of service; and so, too, though not so directly, an act of service is an act of worship. There is, nevertheless, a positive distinctness in the character of the two acts, though there is an affinity. In heaven our energies of being will be absorbed in worship and service.

Prayer, too, is an act of service; but all service is not prayer. This is an exercise of soul peculiarly adapted to our present needy state, and will cease in heaven, save as respects our priesthood for others.

i. The feelings which pervade the soul in *worship* are those characterized by adoration, applauding, exalting, rejoicing, glorifying, and praising; and involve absorption of soul in God when carried to its full extent.

ii. Different are the feelings in *service*. The thoughts and feelings, instead of being directly *to* God, as in worship, are *from* Him, towards objects and things on earth, and then, in act, back to Him again. Thus every act of our life, of whatever character, if accord-

ing to the Scriptures being done *as to Him*, and *not* to self, nor to the world, is an act of acceptable service to God.

Communion with God in worship, and communion with Him in service, are not always, nay seldom, are maintainable together,—for this simple reason, that the *latter* has reference to persons and things down here, while the *former* has exclusive reference to God above, leaving the soul free from intervening objects. This distinction is of great practical importance to a soul seeking to walk with God every moment. By confounding the two things, the soul is bereft of much liberty and much power, and is especially exposed to Satan's accusations, on the ground that failing to maintain communion in worship, it fails to be acceptable to God in its feelings, and walk, and ways; whereas, doing "whatever we do to the glory of God," is precisely that act and spirit that is well pleasing to Him, and according both to His mind and to our capacity and ability to do it. The soul that is instructed, however, in the spirit of service will continually refer to God in prayer, pausing to draw down strength from above, and will also again and again be bowed in worship. (Gen. xxiv.)

iii. The feelings of communion with God in *prayer* derive their character from the amount of faith, knowledge of God, and sense of need that exists. There may be prayer (*i.e.*, the expression in words or felt need), and yet not communion with God in prayer. To have communion, there must be an amount of faith in the soul sufficient to assure it of God's hearing the desires and requests presented, and that He is willing to meet them, if good and according to His will. This faith is cotemporaneous only with obedience; and hence, in order to enter into the full power of prayer and intercession (pouring out the soul into the bosom of God in the assurance that it finds its full place there, and that by patient and persevering waiting it

will be answered), the importance of obedience and holiness.

“Praying in the Holy Ghost” is communion with God in prayer, and nothing short of it. Much that is called prayer may be merely a form, or habit acquired; or, if beyond this, the expression only of certain habitual necessities without abiding dependence and looking to God, and without persevering importunity.

Prayer, to be “fervent and effectual,” and according to “the mind of God,” must be inwrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost; and to attain and abide in a condition in which, as a rule, the soul can thus deal with God, involves the greatest true-heartedness, sacrifice of will, and unceasing striving after being “perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect.” Communion with God in prayer, like communion with Him in worship and service, involves deep, true, and whole-hearted practical godliness.

“ABOUND IN HOPE.”

ROM. xv. 13.

WE want to be more *unsatisfied* with everything down here; we are not sufficient in *hope*; we should have *no object* but the presence and glory of the Lord.

In Psalm xc. all that the man of God sees is the vanity of human life, and the “return” of the Lord. He does not anticipate change in the character of human things; but he looks for the return of the Lord, and then for the being “made glad” and “satisfied.”

So in Psalm lxxxiv. the heart of the worshipper is in the way, *unsatisfied* till he appear before God in Zion. He may have the “pools,” and the “rain,” and the “strength of the Lord” also; but he is *unsatisfied* till he reach Zion. Gideon’s chosen three hundred express this. Refreshment had no power to stop them; they took refreshment only for the sake of the journey, or as being a journeying people; still they

lapped the water as a *travelling* dog lapped it, and did not kneel down to it, as though they were giving themselves to it.

And this should be our mind. Nothing should be allowed to interfere with *hope*. We are to hope to the end. (1 Pet i. 1.) We are saved by hope. (Rom. viii.) We are still prisoners of hope till the morning comes.

The Holy Ghost is given, not to change this attribute of the soul, but to *strengthen* it. He does not bring His refreshment in order to provide something that will do instead of the Bridegroom's presence; but by His refreshings He nourishes the hope of that presence, "that ye may abound in *hope* through the power of the Holy Ghost." He so sheds abroad the love of God in us as to give warrant to the richest hope. (Rom. v.) But we need to be more like Gideon's men, to be using His refreshings, but still to be on the way. And if *even the Holy Ghost* will not usurp the place of the Bridegroom, or purpose to do that for us which the return of Jesus alone can do, even to *satisfy* us, how should we refuse that place or authority to everything else?

The Spirit of comfort does not assume to be the Bridegroom—nothing that He brings with Him in this age of His presence amounts to the supper of the Lamb. The table of the wilderness is not the marriage feast. Guests are bidden *now*, but the supper is still *in prospect*.

Then if we thus refuse to allow any *pleasure or blessing* by the way to rival the hope of the marriage supper, shall we not also have to refuse to allow any *pain or vexation* by the way to cloud that hope? Oh that we may be still consciously *in the way*, through evil as well as through good, through the plain or the rough places, having in our eye the *hope* which God Himself has set before us, that our faith and hope may be only in Him.

I find that my heart has great need of this, and I

look with admiration at the mind of the apostle in 2 Cor. iv. v. as standing so separate and so elevated, beyond what my soul has ever conceived. Let us consider it together.

He knew he carried a treasure; well, so do you and I. He knew that this treasure was in an earthen vessel; so do you and I. But being in this strange, complex state, he thus shows the experience or working of it. He was troubled, but not distressed. In his course through the world he was showing out "the dying" of the Lord Jesus, but also His "life;" that is, he was like Jesus, without any resource in man; but his resource was in God, as Jesus' was, who was cast upon God from the womb. (Psalm xxii.; 2 Cor. iv. 8, 10.) Such was the apostle's life—his dying life in this world. Like Christ, he had no resource in man; but all he had was in God. Of course this was not so perfect as in the Lord; but the principle of his life was the same.

But then I judge we get a further thing (verses 11-14). It is not only that he was hanging simply upon God, as Jesus did, for his life in passing through this world, but he was daily ready to surrender this life in the blessed hope of resurrection, as Jesus was. He was alive, it is true, but ever delivering himself to death in sympathy with the *resurrection* hope of Jesus.

The two things are true of the Lord: His life in the body was sustained by God, as we have seen from Psalm xxii. 9, 10; but His body was delivered up at the last. Jesus might have called for legions of angels; but He surrendered up His life, because He looked for life *in resurrection*. And He got it—He was raised up. The apostle is willing to follow his Master in both of these things. He is willing to take God as his portion while life in the body lasts, and then to give up "the body," so as to let it be seen to be but "mortal flesh," in the hope of getting life with Jesus in resurrection.

What greatness of faith and hope are here. I can

discover this in the pages of the book; but not a line of it in the tablet of the poor, weak, and narrow heart. I am too much of a Corinthian, desiring that *life* should work in me (verse 12) rather than *death*, loving rather the enjoyments of the gospel, than the *services* and *sufferings* of the gospel.

But after this our apostle goes on to tell them that he is ready to go through all this, not only as following his Master, but also for their sakes, that they by his labours might be brought to join the heavenly company of harpers by and by (verse 15).

Then I combine verses 16, 17, 18, and read the apostle's mind thus: That by these labours the bodily man is decaying and wasting, yet the inner, or spiritual man, is strengthened; and while the mind of the spiritual man is thus strengthened in this decay of the outer man, his crown is getting brighter and brighter by affliction and suffering.

The whole man is thus advanced by this precious and twofold operation. His soul is cherished, his dignity is advanced; and all this goes on together, while *the looking at the inner things of heaven* is cultivated; for without *that communion* there would be no profit. Here was an eye fixedly resting on the distant joy—counting the towers, and marking well the bulwarks of that city of God that shone before it, surveying the heavenly country which the promises had spread out in the prospect.

"A little while" of mingled joy and sorrow;
 "A little while" to love and serve below;
 To wait the dawning of that bright to-morrow,
 When morn shall break upon our night of woe.

A little longer in this vale of weeping,
 Of yearning for the sinless home above;
 "A little while" of watching, and of keeping
 Our garments, by the power of Him we love.

"A little while!" and we shall dwell for ever
 Within our bright, our everlasting home,
 Where Jesus and His bride no time shall sever,
 Nor blight of sin, nor curse of death shall come."

DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCHES OF GOD.*

DISCIPLINE is a solemn thing, since it is exercised amongst those who are the subjects of grace. It belongs to the family and household of faith, having to do with those who are "within," not with those who are "without." (1 Cor. v. 12, 13; Heb. xii. 5-8.) It is instituted in the way of chastisement (1 Cor. xi. 32; 2 Cor. ii. 6), not of wrath; and having in view the well-being of even those upon whom it is to be exercised, its character is ever corrective and restorative. (1 Cor. v. 5, and Gal. vi. 1.)

In approaching this deeply-humbling subject, let us remember those gracious words concerning our heavenly Father's chastisement of us, His foolish, wandering children—"He for our *profit*, that we may be partakers of His holiness." The subject is a solemn one; for it bids us remember that "our God is a consuming fire," and that to serve Him acceptably, it must be "with reverence and godly fear." It is also a humbling one; for were there no outbreaks of sin, no defilement of the white raiment, no shame, or cause of grief to our Emmanuel, there would be no necessity for the exercise of discipline.

Those who believe in Jesus are not only justified from all things, but are also adopted into the family and household of faith; they belong of necessity to that body which is the house, the Church, of the

* This article is extracted from a pamphlet published in New Zealand, and not easily procurable here. On account of the interest attaching to the subject, we reprint from it at considerable length, making some omissions and abbreviations. The writer, Mr. Samuel J. Deck, left this country for New Zealand twenty years ago, and there has found it needful to search the Scriptures, for his own guidance, on the question of Discipline. The truths to which he directs attention are very important, and suitable for varied application.

living God. God would ever have us walk in the power of the wondrous blessed truth, that “*now* are we the people of God,” called out of darkness into His marvellous light. It is on this ground that we are exhorted to “abstain from fleshly lusts;” and to “come out, and be separate, and touch not the unclean.” (1 Pet. iii. 10; 2 Cor. vi. 16, 17.) It is on this ground, even what God has done for us, that Christians are to gather together and receive one another. Hence the commandment with regard to Christian fellowship in Romans xv. 7 is, “Receive ye *one another* (*i.e.*, the blood-washed ones, the members of Christ alone) *to the glory of God.*” “God is light,” and “we are light in the Lord;” we are therefore to “walk as the children of light.” This at once separates us from a world that lieth in darkness.

Care for the glory of God not only separates us from the evil without, but much more raises up in us a holy indignation and zeal against evil within, whether in ourselves individually, or the Church collectively, as we read—“Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit;” and again, “Purge out therefore the old leaven.” (2 Cor. vii. 1; 1 Cor. v. 7.)

It is, however, with *corporate* (or *church*) action that we have now to do. Should evil break out in a church, if *moral*, the command is, “Put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (1 Cor. v. 13); if *doctrinal*, “If any man preach any other gospel to you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” (Gal. i. 9.)

This is plain and simple; but the question has arisen, How are we to act towards communicants from churches who neglect to purge out evil, but have amongst them those who hold doctrines which Christ hates? For example, the church of Pergamos (Rev. ii. 15): “So hast thou them that hold the doctrines of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate;” and also the

church of Thyatira (v. 20): "*I have against thee that thou sufferest that woman Jezebel to teach,*" &c. How also towards a church which, professing not to have amongst it those holding evil doctrines, yet holds *open communion* with a church in the first condition?

The exercised heart says—Surely an assembly is defiled by suffering evil in its midst; and if so, is it not to be dealt with concerning it? Is it right to connive at the sin in it? Assuredly not. There never can be a question, in the presence of God, whether we should excuse and connive at evil, or deal with it; but the question is, whether the Lord has not instructed us *how* to deal with it; and if so, what is His will in the matter?

I believe that most of the difficulties which have beset this question have mainly arisen from forgetting that God has not only given a revelation of those all-important *principles* which regulate His dealings with man, but also complete and sufficient *precepts* to instruct us in practically carrying them out.

The principles of God group themselves under the two great heads of Holiness and Grace. They spring from the very being and nature of God; for "God is light," and "God is love." God's ways must ever be in harmony with Himself; for "He cannot deny Himself." Love never works outside of light. Fallen man is darkness; therefore the light of God is contrary to him, and condemns him; but, blessed be God, love has found out a way, through the cross of Jesus, wherein "grace may reign through righteousness," and God may manifest Himself to the utmost in man's salvation and blessing. Thus to know Him is eternal life. The principles of God are revealed to, and act upon, the hearts of His people. Because He is light, we abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good, and separate from an evil world which lieth in darkness, testifying against and hating its ungodliness and sin; but because God is love, we mourn over the

poor sinner, bear with long-suffering his opposition and hatred, and ever seek his salvation and peace.

These principles of holiness and grace should ever characterize the Christian and the Church. The precepts of God are in perfect harmony with His attributes, and guide us into that narrow path of grace and righteousness in which we are called to have fellowship with Himself, and glorify Him. If we add to them, or neglect them, we are sure to err to the right hand or to the left, and come short of either the grace or the holiness of God.

This is strikingly exemplified in David's history. See 1 Chron. xiii. and xv. In chapter xiii. David and all Israel desire a right thing, even to "bring again the ark of God;" but instead of enquiring of the precepts of the Lord, they set about it according to their own thoughts. A new cart was procured, and the ark was carried thereon, "and David and all Israel played before God with all their might."

But what was the result of neglecting the *commandments* of the Lord? "The anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, and He smote him . . . and there he died before God and David was much displeased, and David was afraid of God." So it will ever be when God's people neglect in their service to enquire of the commandments of the Lord. Instead of prosperity and blessing, they will experience fresh Perez-uzzas; and all their labours will end in failure, confusion, and sorrow.

In chapter xv. David has learnt his lesson (sometimes a very hard one to learn); he has been to the Word, and enquired of the commandments of the Lord, and says, "None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites; for them hath the Lord chosen." "For because we did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, *for that we sought Him not after the due order.*" David obeys the divine precepts, his service is accepted, and the ark is brought home with music and the voice of joy.

Is it not thus with the Church now? Whilst valuing God's precious word, and meditating continually about it, in order that our hearts may have fellowship with Him in His nature as light and love, is it not also our duty and truest wisdom to search out and obey implicitly its precepts, so that "our love may abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment"? Knowledge without love puffeth up; yet a loving heart needs to be led and disciplined by an instructed understanding.

Let us turn then to the opening chapters of Revelation, as furnishing examples of churches in the condition under consideration, that in Christ's messages to them we may learn the *Lord's thoughts*. This is what we need; may He give us understanding therein.

In considering these very instructive portions of Scripture, to the keeping of which an especial blessing is appended, let us notice first the character in which the Lord Jesus is revealed. It is "the revelation of Jesus Christ"—Jesus, His personal name; Christ, His official name, as God's anointed—the revelation "which God (not the Father) gave unto Him." He appears as the *Servant* of God, the Son of man (ver. 13), the girded One; and the revelation is sent unto us as the *servants* of Christ. (Chap. i. 1; ii. 20.)

We have, therefore, to do with Jesus in these chapters, not as the Bridegroom, but as the Servant of God, dealing on God's behalf with His churches concerning their responsibilities in a dark and evil world. Hence, when we behold Him, "His hairs are white as wool, white as snow"—emblematical of divine purity in judgment (Daniel vii. 9); "His eyes are as a flame of fire," divine, searching light; and "out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword"—"the sword of the Spirit," "the Word of God," a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." We have also to do with Him in the way of "tribulation," and "the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ," as "the faith-

ful witness, the first-begotten from the dead," the One "who liveth, and was dead, and is alive for evermore." Precious truth for a suffering, tempted, witnessing church to hold fast!

The revelation is given to Christ's churches; not to the Church as in unity, but as represented by seven churches—as so many distinct witnesses for God. Christ seems to select these seven particular churches in Asia for the following reasons:—

1. As seven is the perfect number, they would represent the entire Church of God on earth.

2. As the seven churches mentioned were severally in the seven spiritual conditions indicated in the addresses to them, at the time when the revelation was given to the Apostle John, the Lord Jesus took occasion to figure forth through them the seven spiritual conditions into which churches might fall, sending the fitting word accordingly.

3. The order in which these churches are addressed may give a prophetic sketch of the seven spiritual conditions which would successively characterize the Church upon earth before Christ's coming.

And now a few words concerning the figures of the vision—"the *mystery* of the seven stars and of the seven golden candlesticks." The mystery is double, representing the Church in a twofold aspect.

I. By "*seven stars*, which are the angels of the seven churches." A star is a heavenly object. Its light is from above. Though it shines on the earth, it is not of it. So also is the Church essentially from above, shining on the earth, yet not of it. The stars are represented as together held in His right hand who is "the Alpha and Omega," the "Almighty." Here we have the Ephesian view of the Church—"seated together in heavenly places *in Christ*." Far above earth's strifes and confusions, it is viewed as upheld and united in Christ's almighty hand. This blessed position of security nothing can touch (John x. 28); therefore, whilst

the candlesticks may be removed, the stars remain. We have to notice, however, that as this mystery regards the Church whilst actually on earth, it is represented, even in this aspect, not by one but seven stars, each shining with the same heavenly effulgence, but bearing its own distinct light.

We learn here that the Church is essentially a heavenly thing. It is no voluntary association or institution of man, but "the Church of the living God." Begotten at Pentecost by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, it is sustained and perpetuated by the same divine energy—the Lord adding to the Church continually such as shall be saved. Such is the origin, character, and responsibility of the Church of God, whether viewed as a whole in the seven stars, or looked at in each local assembly or individual star. Seen in its earthly aspect, we behold failure and perverseness, confusion and ruin; but viewed by the eye of faith, as it is represented before God, we behold only glory, beauty, and power. The light of the star never dims. God beholds not iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel. (Numb. xxiii. 21.) It is important to remember this, not alone for comfort, but also because the walk of God's people is ever to be according to their standing—that for which they are apprehended of Christ Jesus. (Phil. iii. 13.)

II. By "*seven golden candlesticks, which are the seven churches.*" This carries us back to those "figures of the true" spoken of in Hebrews ix., which typified Christ and the Church. (Turn to Ex. xxv. 31–40.) The candlestick in the tabernacle was made of pure gold; it had six branches, and seven lamps, "made to give light;" and it was the high priest's office, as a type of Christ, to go into the tabernacle "to dress and set up" the lamps thereof.

We note, however, a remarkable departure from these "figures" in the vision given to John; for, instead of seeing seven lamps *united in one* golden candle-

stick, we behold seven distinct golden candlesticks, each standing apart, and Christ walking in the midst of them.

Why this departure from the figures of old? If we remember that the golden candlestick of old stood within the tabernacle, inside the holy place, where it was entirely surrounded by the emblems of the beauty and glory of heaven, and that therefore its light availed nothing for the world without, we shall understand that it represented the Church in its Ephesian aspect—as “seated together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus,” continually rejoicing before God in the light of priestly service and praise.

Here, however, we have to do with the Church as on earth, in a position of light-bearing—God’s witness in the world for holiness and grace. The seven lamps are not united into one golden candlestick, but each of the seven candlesticks has a distinct place of responsibility; each is to give light. They are all formed of the same precious material, consume the same holy oil, and are watched over and tended by the same faithful, gracious eye and hand; yet are there seven candlesticks, each having its individual lamp to uphold, and standing *in this responsibility on its own base.*

We learn here that the Church is placed in the world to be God’s light therein, and that in this responsibility of light-bearing each church holds a distinct position before God. Unlike Israel in the flesh, the Church is seen in the world as a scattered people—“strangers scattered” here and there in little companies or churches. These churches possess no earthly country, city, or king. Their citizenship and king are in heaven. This heavenly link unites them, and by faith suffices. No sanhedrim, synod, or representative constitution, is bequeathed them, to confederate and legislate for the whole. No; each candlestick stands on its own base, and each church is praised, rebuked, and exhorted, according to its own condition before God; and this as entirely in its individual character, and without refer-

ence to other churches, as if it were the alone witness for God upon earth.

Thus, in writing to the church of Ephesus, whilst Christ reveals Himself as the one "who holdeth the seven stars in His right hand," blessedly reminding it of its common standing and union in Himself with all the churches of God, He says, "I know *thy* works, and *thy* labours, and *thy* patience," &c; and, "I have against *thee*, because *thou* hast left *thy* first love." Christ does not occupy Ephesus with the state of Pergamos, Thyatira, or Laodicea, but with its own condition and responsibility to Himself. His message is personal—"I know *thy* works;" "I have against *thee*;" "Repent, or else I will come unto *thee* quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." True, He commends Ephesus because it "hated the deeds of the Nicolaitanes," and therefore dealt with any holding that evil doctrine, whether they came from any other church, say from Pergamos (where alas! the evil was allowed), or were manifested within. Still, I say, Christ never enquires of Ephesus concerning Pergamos or Thyatira; but His message is personal, bringing it into His own immediate presence, as to its own responsibilities and condition—and so with the messages to all the other churches.

This apparent isolation of the churches seems, to the natural understanding, to be a position of weakness and danger. Ever since man joined to rear the tower of Babel, confederacy has been his pillar of strength, and he shrinks from nothing so much as dependency on God. The spirit of confederacy—this trusting to an arm of flesh—has constantly leavened the Church; for it is so hard to be content with God's arrangements, and occupy a position which compels us to lean *only* on Him. This is the happy, invincible position of faith; and it is the position which the Church is to occupy on earth, as is typified in the *mystery* of the seven stars, and the seven golden candlesticks.

To man's thoughts each candlestick (or church) occupies a contemptible position of isolation and weakness; but faith sees the seven stars (*i. e.*, all the churches) upheld and federated in the almighty hand of Christ, and knows that amidst the seven golden candlesticks the Son of man is ever walking in the faithful love of priestly service. It knows that He is watching over and ordering them, and it is content; desiring no other bond, no safer supervision.

Past church history shows how necessary it is that we should understand, and keep this mystery. Forgetting it, the Church sought to remedy the seeming defect by setting up a church organization beyond the Word, which ended at last in the visible unity of churches under the metropolitan see and popedom of Rome; the Pope and the church (as in council of bishops assembled) usurping the offices of Christ and the Holy Ghost. What the Church gained in outward, it lost in spiritual power, and we see the result in the superstition, evil, and ruin of the middle ages, and of the present time. Christ, however, has not failed. He has been walking amongst the candlesticks, removing some indeed, but continually raising up fresh ones by the power of the Holy Ghost, and keeping the light burning amidst the darkness.

I fear the same spirit which culminated in Popery, with its pretensions to infallibility and universal submission, is now at work in the character of Church unity, taking off the consciences of saints and churches from direct responsibility to Christ, to occupy them with what "*the Church*" has done; claiming for its actions and judgments the authority and guidance of the Holy Ghost.

We would notice, in conclusion, regarding this mystery, that it takes up, not the future position and glory of the Bride, but the Church's present position as God's witness in the world. It is a position of conflict, and yet rest; weakness, and yet strength; isolation,

and yet union. A position of faith, with faith's contrarities; "as dying, and behold we live;" as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." It is unscriptural to speak of a Christian or of a church as representing the unity of the body; for the body on earth is called to represent not itself, or anything about itself, but its absent Head; and thus each church is to be an epistle (article wanting in the Greek) of Christ, known and read of all men. (2 Cor. iii. 3.) As Christ is "the light of the world," and is "the bright and morning star;" so are His people, reflecting His image, to shine as lights in the world. (Phil. ii. 15.)

Christ's oversight of His churches is as truly a present, practical reality, as is that unseen, mysterious, vital power which gives direction and unison to the members of our natural bodies. Does it then become Ephesus, or Smyrna, or Rome, or any assembled church delegates, to assume Christ's prerogatives? Dare any say that there is a necessity that they do so? or are they wiser than He? Nay, let us remember that Christ has to do with His churches, and they have individually to do with Him, and take care that we hear and keep "what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Looking at the messages, we learn that Christ values *fervent love* in His people before all things else. What a happy aspect the *Ephesian* church presented before others! Works, labours, patience, abhorrence of evil, soundness in doctrine, patience (seemingly under persecution), and not fainting—all for His name's sake. But, alas! His eyes, "which are as a flame of fire," detected an unjudged evil, and that no light one; *there was declension in love*—love to Jesus first; but as a necessary consequence, in love also towards the brethren, and towards the poor perishing world which Jesus died to redeem. "I have against thee," says Christ, "because *thou hast left thy first love.*" He forgets not the sufferings, labours, and faithfulness of His people; but oh! He prizes most highly their

affections. This evil must be repented of; for Christ cannot allow sin in His Church. If we judge not ourselves, He must judge us; if the church repent not, He will remove its candlestick. I would notice, in connection with the removal of the candlestick, that the churches are dealt with concerning what *they have* (*i.e.*, the light they are giving), and not what they *are*. Thus all the candlesticks are golden (not gilt), *i.e.*, they are essentially heavenly, divine in their nature. This is as much true concerning Laodicea as concerning Ephesus or Smyrna, though of Smyrna Christ says, "But thou art rich;" whilst of Laodicea He testifies, "Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor," &c. Alas! this is also true concerning many saints individually; for instead of possessing gold, and silver, and precious stones, their works will be burnt up, and they will suffer loss, though saved themselves, "yet so as by fire." (1 Cor. iii. 12-15.)

The removal of the candlestick signifies the disowning of its *testimony*; *i.e.*, its removal from a position of light-bearing on earth.

To the church of *Pergamos* Christ reveals Himself as "He which hath the sharp sword with the two edges." It is with the power of the Holy Ghost Christ ever deals with His people *through the Word*. (Isaiah viii. 20.) We need to remember this. Does He comfort, admonish, rebuke, or instruct us? it is ever through the Word. The Word is here likened to a two-edged sword, quick and powerful, cutting both ways. It is the sword of the Spirit, the rightful weapon of the Church. Has the Church to combat Satan's infidel persecuting power? It overcomes him by the Word. At other times Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, and seeks to corrupt the Church; working within it by those who come in the guise of the Lord's servants (such is Balaam doctrine), and it may even be by some who, like Peter in Matt. xvi. 23, are really His honoured, devoted servants. This is the

most dangerous form of evil; but still our weapon is the Word—"to the law and to the testimony." Everything is false to which we cannot add, "Thus saith the Lord," however plausible it may appear, or in whatever good and holy motives arrayed. Oh for grace to bring everything to the keen edge of the Word!

Satan had been using the sword of man's persecution against this church, and they were faithful, "holding fast Christ's name, and not denying his faith;" but Satan was also working within. Precious to Christ as is the martyr faithfulness of His people, yet had He against them, because they had amongst them those who held the doctrine of Balaam and of the Nicolaitanes. It became them to repent, and to use the sword of the Spirit against the evil within; "Else," says Christ, "I will come unto *thee* quickly, and will fight against *them* (not thee) with the sword of my mouth."

In *Thyatira* Christ has again to do with unjudged doctrinal evil. Revealing Himself as "the Son of God, who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass," marking and delighting to own each precious fruit of the Spirit, its works, love, service, faith, patience, and taking note of increased energy, He adds, "I have a *few* things against thee, that thou *sufferest* that woman Jezebel to *teach* and to seduce my servants," &c. Whereas Pergamos was guilty of retaining those who held the doctrines of Balaam and of the Nicolaitanes, the evil occupied a far more serious position in *Thyatira*, being *taught*, and *actively promulgated*, by "that woman Jezebel," who, calling herself a prophetess, was seducing Christ's servants "to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols." This was the sin of *Thyatira*—it *suffered* that woman Jezebel to *teach*, &c.; a far more dangerous, culpable neglect of duty than that of Pergamos, by as much as the evil was more active and prominent.

Now how does CHRIST regard and deal with the church of Thyatira whilst in this sad and evil condition? This is the object of our enquiry. The Lord grant us eyes to see and ears to hear.

We have to notice first a corporate dealing with the church *as a whole*. Christ begins by *owning all that was of God in it*. "I know thy works, and charity, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first." Oh, what a heart-searching, yet encouraging, word is this! "*I know thy works,*" &c. The Lord never forgets His people's "works of faith and labours of love." He will not lose the good in the evil, nor indiscriminately condemn the precious with the vile. No; this is far from the Lord.

Yet, whilst the Lord so graciously delights to make much of the grace in His people, we have next to mark and remember that He cannot pass by their sin. *He must notice and rebuke that which was evil in the church*. "Notwithstanding," says Christ, "I have a few things *against thee*." Having commended the good, His eyes of fire must search out, make manifest, and condemn the evil, that the church may repent thereof and put it away. The *church* of Thyatira had not embraced the doctrine, and was not, therefore, charged with receiving it; but with suffering its teacher and her disciples. This was its guilt, and the measure of its defilement. It was not called upon to repent of the *doctrine* (concerning which Christ could never say, "I have a few things against thee")—but of its sin in neglecting to obey Christ's commandment to put it away. Had Christ called upon the *church* to repent of the doctrine, He could not have said to saints in it, "To you I say as many as *have not this doctrine*." On the one hand, care for the purity of the church, and for their own souls, required that the leaven be purged out, lest it leaven the whole lump; and on the other hand, loyalty to Christ, and divine

love to the fallen ones, demanded that there should be no toleration of that which He hated.

Surely we learn here that it is a church's duty not to suffer evil-doers, but to purge itself from evil, whether moral or doctrinal; for in the instance before us the doctrinal evil also implied moral evil—idolatry and fornication being sins named in 1 Cor. v. 11. We also learn that in dealing with a church which dishonours Christ, by suffering that which He hates, it is our clearest duty to *deal faithfully* with it concerning those things wherein it has dishonoured Him and forgotten His authority; remembering, however, like Christ, *first to own and make much of what is of God in it.*

We have next to notice that whilst there is a corporate dealing with the church, there is also an *individual dealing with its members*, according to their condition before God. Thus Christ says, "I gave *her* (Jezebel) space to repent of her fornication (how long-suffering and gracious, and how instructive to us!); and *she* repented not. Behold, I will cast *her* into a bed, and *them* that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds;" and then, turning from Jezebel and those who were committing adultery with her, to those that had not embraced the doctrine, Christ continues, "Unto *you* I say, and unto *the rest* in Thyatira, as many as *have not* this doctrine, and which *have not* known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have hold fast till I come."

The Lord recognizes two classes in the church—such as *had*, and such as *had not*, the evil doctrine—and sends special messages to them accordingly. He exhorts the first class, even those *who had* the evil doctrine, to *repentance*, reminding them that though the church may fail in its responsibility to judge its members, and though we may refuse to judge our-

selves, we have all to do with Him who "searcheth the reins and heart," and will give unto every one "*according to his works.*" To the latter class, even to those who *had not* the doctrine, His simple message is, "I will put upon you none other *burden.* But that which ye have *hold fast* till I come." The burden which Christ puts upon them is the obligation which rests upon all His people to keep His commandments, referring, it may be, more especially here to the commandment in 1 Cor. v., to "put away" the evil-doer, or, it may be, to the commandment enjoined upon the Gentile churches in Acts xv. 28, which burden Jezebel was teaching them to throw aside. Can Christ remove the obligation of obedience from His people? Is not His yoke easy, and His burden light? Are not His ways ways of pleasantness, and all His paths peace? Let us "hold fast," then, the words of Jesus, remembering that "a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

From this we learn that in dealing with a church in a similar condition to that of Thyatira (which suffered in it a teacher and school of evil doctrine), whilst we dare not ignore its great sin in tolerating that which Christ hates, we ought not to disown the church corporately, but learn of Him how to recognize *what is of God in it*, putting a difference between such of its members as *have*, and such as *have not*, the evil doctrine.

Confidence in such a church would cease, and its letters of commendation be regarded as untrustworthy, until it had repented and put away the evil. We must not, however, reject it, as though it stood in the same place which the holders of evil doctrine occupy, with whom we are commanded to "keep no company;" but, turning from *corporate dealing*, or *open communion* by letters of commendation, we must fall back in our reception upon *individual dealing* with the members of the church, faithfully examining *all* who come from it,

that we may put a difference between such as *have*, and such as *have not*, the evil doctrine, and act accordingly. If any church neglected to exercise such godly care when dealing with a church which suffered evil doctrine, it would leave its portals open for the entrance of evil doctrine and teachers. It would not be receiving to the glory of God; it would therefore, I judge, become other churches to deal with it as they would with a church in which they knew were those holding evil doctrines, viz., to receive from it *only on personal examination*. Were such action faithfully maintained by every church, Christ's glory would be cared for, and evil-doers detected and excluded; whilst "the rest"—even those to whom Christ writes, "That which ye have hold fast till I come"—would be received, and the unity of the body and the fellowship of the faith maintained.

In this personal examination as to the *doctrine*, rebuke and admonition must always be conjoined concerning the share which every member has had in the church's guilt in corporately "suffering" the evil. We must, however, remember that teachers, fathers, &c., in Christ incur a greater responsibility and guilt than attaches to those who are weak ones—babes in Christ—those who are, as it were, learning their a, b, c, and therefore incompetent to understand matters which belong to those of maturer years and understanding.

What! it will be said, Are we to leave the door open for the reception of those who, though not professing themselves to hold the evil doctrine, are yet in avowed fellowship with its teacher? Might we not thus admit into the heart of an assembly persons who were so far under the immoral, deceitful influence of the system as to conceal the fact that they sympathized with the evil teacher? We will not deny the danger, nor forget how Paul warned the elders of Ephesus that "grievous wolves" would "*enter in*, not sparing the flock;" yea, and that *of themselves* men should arise

“speaking perverse things.” It was a subtle, seducing doctrine in Thyatira—the very depths of Satan; but its workings could not escape Him “whose eyes are as a flame of fire.” He knew exactly the condition of all in the church, discerning those who had, and those who had not, the evil. And is not He willing and able even *now* to grant unto His servants who wait on Him discernment concerning the spiritual condition of those with whom they have to do on His behalf? Let us only watch, and seek humbly to walk with faith in the path of obedience, and we need not fear either the power or the craft of the enemy; for “greater is He that is in us than He that is in the world.”

I would also remark, that it does not follow that because a Christian is in communion with a church which suffers an evil teacher, or school of doctrine, that therefore he is necessarily in avowed fellowship with that teacher, except it be in the *general* sense in which *all* the members of a church are in professed fellowship and responsibility with one another; otherwise those designated “the rest in Thyatira” were in avowed fellowship with Jezebel. No; Christ is the professed centre of fellowship in the churches, and not any teacher, however gifted or influential.

Having dwelt especially on the messages to those churches which *suffered* evil doctrine, we would notice how the personal responsibility of the individual members is brought out in the word of exhortation which closes each message. It is, “*He* that hath an ear to hear, let *him* hear;” and again, “*To him* that overcometh,” &c.—the corporate failure of the church never lessening the individual responsibility of each member to the Lord Jesus. He never fails, though all of man may be in ruin. It is, nevertheless, the voice of the Spirit to the churches; therefore, what is especially addressed to one particular church is also intended for the profit of churches and saints generally.

These chapters likewise present the seven spiritual conditions into which Christians, or churches, may fall; beginning with an Ephesian, and, alas! often ending with a Laodicean condition; and Christ's exhortation accordingly. Well would it be if churches and believers remembered to examine themselves by the light of these chapters concerning their own condition, that they might obtain the needed word of encouragement or rebuke from the Lord. Do we desire also to admonish and edify one another? It becomes us carefully and prayerfully to ponder these important lessons, that, having the mind of Christ, we may be able to discern the spiritual condition of our brethren, and obtain the word in season.

I would solemnly ask my brethren in Christ who may read this to weigh it carefully and prayerfully before God, and enquire whether these Scriptures do, or do not, teach the things I have been endeavouring to set forth, and, if they do, to hear and *keep* what "the Spirit saith unto the churches."

CONSECRATION AND FAITH.

CONSECRATION separates us from every known sin, and lays everything upon the altar of God as a perpetual sacrifice. Faith leaves all in God's hands, and receives and accepts no wisdom, no goodness, no strength, but what comes from Christ as the true source of inward and everlasting life.

Consecration renounces the ALL of the creature; faith recognizes and accepts the ALL of God. Consecration implies rejection and hatred of *all* evil; faith implies the reception and love of *all* good. The one alienates, abhors, and tramples under foot *all* unsanctified natural desires, aims, and purposes; the other approves, receives, and makes a part of its own self, *all* the desires, aims, and purposes of God; and both are

implied and involved, and carried to their highest possible exercise, in communion or fellowship with God.

The mind, when in communion with God, is disposed to indulge in subdued and affectionate acts of contemplation, rather than in examinative and discursive or reasoning acts. The examinative or discursive state of mind implies the presence of God to the intellect merely; the contemplative state, while not excluding an intellectual view, implies His presence to the heart as well.

At such times the soul seems to know but one object, and that is God and His Christ; and to have but one feeling, and that is love. It is drawn upward, and discerns the heavenly and eternal realities, and therefore mere earthly objects and motives have but little influence. The conversation carried on between the soul and God is too high for human language, and words fail to express the deep emotions and feelings of the heart. The conversation is with God, and not with man, and is in God's manner, and not after the manner of men; and He can understand, and delight in, the unuttered expressions of the soul.

In this attitude of serene and joyous contemplation of God Himself, the soul continually, though oftentimes silently, pours out its adoration and praise, its gratitude and love. The blessed Lord recognizes the full meaning of this hidden language, and returns it by unveiling Himself in the heights and depths of His love and grace. There is thus a constant flowing and reflowing of affection; love ascending to God, and love returning from Him.

Thus there is not only a consciousness of love to God on the part of the one who enjoys this communion, but, what is far more blessed, there is a consciousness, or rather a deeply wrought conviction, that God loves him. He can say, in the beautiful expression of the Canticles, "His left hand is under my head, and His

right hand doth embrace me. He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me is love."

It is very obvious, that though this state of mind is the proper portion and purchased possession of all believers, as raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ, yet the real enjoyment of it is connected with experience. If we would enter into the holiest, and have fellowship with God there, we not only need hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience through the precious blood of Christ, and bodies washed with pure water, but also a true heart, and full assurance of faith.

Faith lays hold of the finished work of Christ, and beholds Him as our great High Priest, and thus gives boldness to draw near by the blood of Jesus. The true heart lays everything at the feet of Jesus, and desires to know and do no will but His; and thus we have confidence before God, and though conscious of much and continued failure, can lift up our faces to Him without spot, and know that we are those whom He delights to bless, and in whom He is well pleased.

This state of communion with God, without necessarily being characterized by revelations or raptures, constitutes the soul's spiritual festival, a season of special inward blessing, a foretaste of heaven. The mind raised above worldly vicissitudes, and the strifes and oppositions of men, reposes deeply in a state of happy submission and quietude, and proves the reality of that promise—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee."

As an old writer has said—"He who comprehendeth all things in His will, and beholdeth all things in His light, hath his heart fixed, and abideth in the peace of God." And in the language of another devout writer of early times such persons "enjoy the most calm and peaceable liberty, being lifted up above all fear or agitation of mind concerning death or hell, or any other things which might happen in time or in eternity."

If consecration be without reserve, and faith without limit, the peace of God, pure, beautiful, sublime, must keep or garrison the heart and mind.

What higher idea can we form of the most advanced Christian experience than that of entire union with the will of God, by the subjection of the human will? When self-will, the great evil of our fallen nature, is subdued, and the will of man, ceasing from its divergencies and its disorderly vibrations, becomes fixed to one point, henceforward immoveable, harmonizing moment by moment with God's central and absorbing purposes, is not this heaven begun upon earth? Is not this being conformed to the image of Christ?

Oh, set me as a seal upon Thine heart, O Lord!

Let the undisturbed communion of the Holy Ghost

Be mine for ever to enjoy.

May Thine own presence cheer me,

And peace—the deep, profound, unruffled peace of God—

My present, everlasting portion be!

Grant, too, my gracious God,

That in these faithless, formal days

I faithful to the end may prove,—

Leaning upon Jesus all the way,

In peaceful confidence of His love,—

And, like a Nazarite indeed,

Be separate wholly to the Lord.

And purify myself, even as He is pure.

Thus, Lord, I pray, attend unto my cry,

And make me feel my nothingness.

Oh, do not, do not leave me!

Lest I become an easy prey to him who's ever on the watch

With gins and snares to catch me,

And make me think I'm something,

When I'm nothing

But what Thy grace hath made me.

My Father, hear me! At thy feet I fall:

Oh, grant me my request,

And put Thy fear within me,

And make me ever to enjoy THY LOVE!—

That deep, eternal spring

Of all my blessing:

I ask it in the Saviour's name. AMEN.

THE CHRISTIAN'S DIGNITY AND HONOURS.

WE live very much below our privilege, as sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, when we lose sight of the great dignity and honour which are bestowed upon us in virtue of our interest in the work, office, and person of Jesus. We are too often content with the knowledge of our eternal security, and rest so satisfied with what has been done in and for us, forgetful of our position as heirs of God and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, that we dishonour Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light, and conferred upon us greater dignity than earth's proudest sons can attain. We will notice a few of the honours which are the right of every child of God, and thus seek, by the study of His word, to learn what dignity is bestowed upon us, and what glory awaits us.

We have rank such as the world cannot boast; for we are constituted "kings and priests unto God" (Rev. i. 6), "a kingdom of priests." (Ex. xix. 6.) We are "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." Crowns are laid up for us (2 Tim. iv. 8); thrones, more powerful than earthly monarchs know, await us. (Rev. iii. 21.)

We have riches greater than earth's richest sons ever imagined: "For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." We are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." In Him we have "unsearchable riches," yea, "durable riches and righteousness."

Our inheritance is secured. Poor we may be in this world's estimation—despised by the noble, the great, the rich of the earth, who glory in their birth, their

greatness, their wealth. Yet we envy them not; for "the fashion of this world passeth away," but "our citizenship is in heaven." "We have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." We are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;" a mansion is prepared for us (John xiv. 1, 2); we are "begotten to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

We have power. "As a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." (Gen. xxxii. 28.) The Christian is essentially a man of prayer; it is his life; and it is in and through this blessed privilege that his power lies; for "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." We have innumerable instances in Holy Scripture of the prevailing power of prayer, and we cannot suppose that anything will be denied to those that ask; for the promises are clear and distinct: "Ask, and ye shall receive." "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." "Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee." When Abraham pleaded for Sodom, he left off asking before God ceased to grant, and the city might have been spared had he continued to entreat. When Jabez called on the God of Israel, God granted him that which he requested. (1 Chron. iv. 10.) Hezekiah's prayer arrested the messenger of death. (Isa. xxxviii. 2-5.) Elijah's supplication restored the widow's son to life. (1 Kings xvii. 21, 22.) Christian reader, you have a mighty weapon at command. Learn here thy power, and use it!

We are conquerors. "The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits." (Dan. xi. 32.) "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Has not faith made more conquerors than the sword? The "hero of a hundred fights" is less a conqueror than the humblest servant of God, who dons the panoply provided for him, and goes forth to war "against princi-

palities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places;" or than he who quits home or country to tell to benighted ones the message of peace and salvation. Read the records of our city missions; study the annals of missionary enterprise in foreign lands, and say, who are the conquerors? (Heb. xi. 32-38.)

We have personal beauty; we need no outward adorning. Jesus views us with the eye of love, and His description of His church is, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." "The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold." The church, too, exclaims with rapture, "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." We find the same declaration in the epistles: "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." "You hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprieveable in His sight."

We have companionship; for "ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant." The world cannot offer friendship like this; its friends are often false and heartless. Worldly fellowship never made a man holier or happier; but the Christian can say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."

We have pleasures. The world presents to the eye and the heart of man all its glittering joys, its stores of glory, of greatness, of wealth, and of pleasure;

but none of these can satisfy the cravings of his immortal soul. On all is written, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." The Christian finds his pleasure in the Lord Jehovah, and with the psalmist says, "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures."

Our prospects are glorious. Much as the Christian has in possession, he has more in anticipation. We joy in the assurance of *a life of plenty*; for "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." (Rev. vii. 16; Isa. xlix. 10.) *A life of light*; for "there is no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light." *A life free from sin or sorrow, care or pain.* (Rev. xxi. 4; Isa. xxxv. 10.) *A life of purity.* "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." "They shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy." *A life of peace*; for "there the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

Beloved brethren, this does not reveal half the glory that awaits us; for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." May He reveal more of His deep things unto us even now by His Spirit!

"IT SHALL BE OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

DEUT. vi. 25.

CALM persistence in well-doing, notwithstanding oppression of spirit, is righteousness—a form of righteousness exceedingly acceptable to Him who appointeth affliction to the very end, that the subject may be "exercised thereby."

"Righteousness." How interpret you this weighty

word? Do you understand it as law-keeping? Yea; but how very much more is it! Study some of its forms described and commanded in God's family.

Directory.—Study the form presented in Gen. xv. 6, and give it its appropriate name. Study the form in Deut. vi. 25, and name it. Study the form in Deut. xxiv. 13, expressing it by the exact term. In like manner study and name the forms of righteousness taught us in Deut. xxxiii. 19; Psa. iv. 5; and Psa. li. 19; in Job xxxvi. 3; in Psa. xxiv. 5; in Isa. xxxii. 17; in Dan. iv. 27; in Dan. ix. 24—a most important passage:—notice the word “bring in,” *not* work out; and notice the word “everlasting.”

Study also the form of righteousness presented in Hos. x. 12; in Mal. iv. 2; in Acts x. 35, a passage very little understood; in Rom. iii. 22; in Rom. viii. 10; in Heb. xii. 11; in James i. 20; in James iii. 18; in 2 Peter i. 1; in 2 Peter ii. 21; in 2 Cor. ix. 9; in Psa. xvii. 15; in Mal. iii. 3; in Rom. ix. 28; in 2 Tim. iii. 16.

When God commands, what is the righteousness of them that hear, performance or obedience? When God discloses or reveals, what? Studying, and pondering, and understanding, and believing, and conformable ordering of the affections and the life. When God promises, what? Hearty acceptance of the promise, so that hope and joy be enkindled. When God threatens or cautions, what? Holy fear and earnest regard or observance. When God chastens or rebukes, what? Meek subjection to the discipline, grateful recognition of the Father's hand, diligent heart-searching respecting the sin rebuked, and earnest and solemn renunciation of it.

When God prospers our works and ways, showers down blessings upon us, sheds abroad in our hearts His peace and love, and maintains our souls in the full light of His countenance, what then is our righteousness? what, indeed? Ah! let us name it wisely.

Thus, in every response of our souls, both morally and emotionally, to the dealing of our God—in every conscientious judgment or resolution, and in every aspiration of affection or desire—the formula applies, “It (this) shall be our righteousness.”

THE CHURCH OF LAODICEA.

REV. iii. 14-22.

THE address to the Church of Laodicea is very solemn, and should lead to deep searchings of heart. Full-blown, unblushing imitation of the truth characterized that church; a form of godliness without the power; a profession of having found such a portion in Christ that they had need of nothing, while they were still at a distance from Him, if not utter strangers to Him.

How like our own day! In many cases we find a clear confession of simple faith in the precious blood of Christ accompanied with thorough and persistent worldliness. The lives of such belie their words, and we dare not reckon or treat them as Christians; we need the distinct guidance of “the Amen, the faithful and true witness,” to teach us how to deal with them.

He is the alone “faithful” One. He does not speak smooth or flattering words, but rebukes and warns; yea, more, He threatens.

He is the true, the only “true witness”—the witness of the holiness as well as of the love of God. He cannot speak of sin as a trifle, as a thing that matters not; He must deal with it solemnly, and seek to arouse and alarm those who are indulging in it.

He is “the beginning of the creation of God,” the “first begotten from the dead,” “the Prince of life,” “the Author and Finisher of faith.” He knows full well all the workings of the life which He Himself bestows; He knows it in its feeblest efforts; He understands its weakest groan. Its faintest whisper will

not pass unheeded; each cry for help will bring a quick response. He never wearies in His patient loving ministry; He will not crush the feeble life, nor quench the flickering flame; but seeks in every way to feed and foster all that is of God.

Such is our Lord—our own beloved Lord! Such are His ways of grace; and yet He says—“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”

Are these His words to us? Is this *our* state? Are *we* lukewarm? No burning love to Him, and yet content and satisfied? No painful sense of cold which makes us seek the warming rays of His rich love; but neither cold nor hot? Some fancied love to Him, enough to lull our souls to sleep; but not enough to stir us up to seek His face, and make us mourn because our hearts are cold?

To such He says—“I will spue thee out of my mouth.” Reject, disown them, as those in whom He has no pleasure; yea, spue them out of His mouth, as those offensive to Him. They have assumed a place to which they have no right, and He will cast them down. They have affected a godliness which they do not possess, and taken a name which does not belong to them, and He will strip them of all pretence, and unveil them in their true character of unwashed and unsaved sinners.

Dost thou say of thyself that thou *art* one born of God, but a wanderer, a backslider? Hast thou forsaken the fountain of living waters, and drank so deeply of the polluted streams of the world, that thy soul has fallen asleep, intoxicated with the poisonous cup with which Satan has beguiled thee? Hast thou become lukewarm, and settled down at a distance from thy God?

Awake! awake! arise and bestir thyself, for great

is thy danger. Listen to these warning words—“*I will spue thee out of my mouth.*” Let them come with thrilling power into thy soul. Refuse them not. Say not, “They are not addressed to me!” Bow down thine ear, and heed the solemn sound. It is the trumpet’s voice to rouse thee from thy deathlike sleep. Think not that thou canst escape. He *will* fulfil His word; and if thou tarriest thus—lukewarm, half-hearted, far from Him—it proves that thou art “none of His,” whatever thou dost think.

Is there a spark of love within thee? Dost thou indeed belong to Christ? If so, His words will bring thee humbled to His feet, to seek reviving from His gracious, powerful hand. *Only return to HIM*, and He will heal thy backsliding; yea, He will love thee freely, and pour the oil of grace afresh upon thy soul, and cause the flame of love once more to burn within thee.

Yet, let no timid, humble one despair. *You* groan before your God because your love is cold and faint. For love you sigh, for love you pine. You feel and mourn your cold, ungrateful heart, and day by day your cries ascend to Him to teach you how to love. True, you are *cold*; but *not* lukewarm. So cold you cannot rest; so cold, may be, that you are wretched. And why? Because you seek to warm yourself, and rouse yourself to love, instead of sitting at *His* feet, and drawing warmth and love from Him. All fulness dwells in Him, and if we would have warm, yea, burning hearts, we must cleave close to *Him*, bask in the sunshine of His love, and drink into His overflowing grace.

But to those who are really lukewarm the Lord thus speaks—“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” Great is the infatuation, terrible the blindness, with which Satan

deceives the soul. Wretched and miserable, and yet deceiving itself with vain and fancied joys. Poor before God—a beggar, bankrupt indeed—and yet persuading itself it is rich. Blind—so blind that it sees not its awful condition. Naked indeed, without a shred to cover it in His holy presence.

And how will He deal with such a soul? He reveals its awful state of self-deception, but does not leave it without remedy. Behold His tenderness! His grace! See how, even to the last, His compassion flows forth! how His mercy abounds!

He presents HIMSELF to this poor and needy and yet self-satisfied one. *Himself*, with an open, bounteous hand, ready to supply its every need.

“I counsel thee.” “Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom.” “He that hearkeneth to counsel is wise.” He has threatened before, and now He counsels, and thus seeks to draw the beguiled and foolish one to His feet.

“To buy of me.” Come, buy without money and without price; bring your wretchedness and misery to be exchanged for His joy; your poverty to be exchanged for His riches; your sin to be cleansed in His blood; your nakedness to be clothed with His righteousness.

“Of *me*.” The One who says, I will “cause those that love me to inherit substance; I will fill their treasures.” It must be of *Himself* alone; the soul must truly deal with Him. The One who is anointed and seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, to give repentance and remission of sin, to comfort all that mourn, and to satisfy every hungry soul.

“Gold tried in the fire.” “Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness.” He is HIMSELF the true gold, the tried gold. He has been plunged into the furnace seven times heated, and proved to be pure gold without alloy; perfect, spotless, eternally pure and holy. It is *Himself* He gives; HIMSELF, the true riches; and who can measure His

worth, His eternal, intrinsic value? Rich indeed is the one who possesses *Him*, and richer still the one who enjoys Him!

Are we those who *possess*, but do *not* enjoy Him? Then let us heed these words, and come to Him for *more* of Himself, *more* of His presence, *more* of His fulness. Thus shall we be rich; yea, rich indeed; so rich that we shall despise and trample on what the world esteems and values, and handling and enjoying the treasures of Christ, our joy will be full, and our love will abound.

“And white raiment.” The fine linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints; the robe prepared by Christ Himself for every one who flies to Him.

“That thou mayest be clothed.” Clothed with Christ, and presented before God in all His perfections, accepted in the Beloved, unblameable and unreprieveable in His sight, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

But more than this—“That the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.” We may be so clothed with Christ, and so walk in fellowship with Him, that our naked flesh will not be seen even by those around us. “Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.” “Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” “Be clothed with humility,” &c. As the soul obeys these precepts, its own natural nakedness and barrenness is hidden, and the life of Christ is manifested in these our mortal bodies; and thus our Father is glorified in us, and we become a name and a praise to Him.

“And anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.” The heavenly eyesalve. Ah, how we need it continually! The dust of this world gets into our eyes and dims our spiritual vision, and we need perpetually to go to *Him*, the Great Physician, to

anoint us with this precious eyesalve, to enable us to see clearly.

We need His thoughts, His judgments, about everything; in His light to see light; to have our eyes anointed that we may be able to see the land which is very far off, and behold the things which are invisible; that now, while passing through this dark and dreary world, we may behold the coming glory, and walk in the light of the unseen, but present and eternal realities of heaven itself.

By faith we may enter even now into the holiest, and the anointed eye may see and judge of everything in the light of God's presence, and thus discern rightly between things that differ, and have fellowship with Him, in all that surrounds or concerns us.

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." Many waters cannot quench His love, neither can the floods drown it. If His rebukes do not restore the soul, He will chasten, yea, scourge. He will pursue the wanderer until He find him; nor will He rest until all His loved ones are perfected in His likeness. Oh for the hearing ear, and understanding heart, which will so yield to His least rebuke, that He may not be obliged to correct and chasten!

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; 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." Want of space will not suffer us to dwell upon these precious words—so rich, so full, so glorious! Our blessed Lord Himself, in condescending love, seeking admittance to our hearts that He may feast with us! Ah, what a feast He gives! He comes *Himself* with blessings in His hands—blessings which none can measure! He knocks, and knocks; He seeks a heart at leisure from all else—a heart prepared to hearken to His voice, eager to feast with Him, and ready to receive the bounteous gifts He brings.

“To him that overcomeeth will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in His throne.” Such honour have all His saints. He will not wear His crown alone. We shall dwell with Him and reign with Him for ever and ever. Wonderful, abounding grace! Poor, wretched, ungrateful creatures as we are, yet He will treat us thus! He will cause us to drink of the river of His pleasures, will load us with the glory which He Himself has won, and give us a place of eternal nearness to, yea, oneness with Himself, which no thought can conceive nor heart comprehend!

Glory be to Him who loved us,
 Washed us from each spot and stain!
 Glory be to Him who bought us,
 Made us kings with Him to reign!
 Glory! glory!
 To the Lamb that once was slain!

THE WHOLE WORD OF GOD.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

DIFFERENT Christians are advanced or maintained in their course by different motives. Of some, the prevailing principle of conduct is *fear*; of others, a *sense of duty*; of others, *gratitude*; of others, *holy reverence or admiration*; of others, *love*; of others, the delight and joy arising from the prospect of the *coming glory*; and of some, perhaps, the motive and power of their holy walk is *all* these principles combined.

How important then, in the ministration of the life-giving word, is the right dividing or distributing of it! And how important, in the individual study of it, is the seeking to obtain an acquaintance with the whole of it!

How watchful should the Christian be against slighting or overlooking any department of the truth!

How careful to maintain in himself a high valuation, not only of the promises and of the revelations of glory, but of the precepts, the prohibitions, the monitions, and the threatenings!

“With thy precepts thou hast quickened me.”
 “Through thy commandments thou hast made me wiser than my enemies.” “The fear of the Lord is clean . . . the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.” “Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart.”

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

“Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us . . . righteousness.”

God has made over Christ to the believing sinner; has enveloped the believer in Christ; has re-created him *in Christ*. (1 Cor. i. 30; Eph. i. 6 [Greek]; 2 Cor. v. 17.)

The believer has not received imputatively the righteousness of Christ (*δικαιοσύνη*) as wrought out by Him in keeping God's holy law, but he has received Christ Jesus Himself (God's gift) as both his substitute and his essential righteousness.

Christ's holy life was not vicarious; we are not saved thereby, but by His offering up of Himself for sin once for all.

He, however, must be manifested as the Lamb without blemish and without spot. He was born without blemish (“that holy thing”), and offered up Himself “without spot” to God, a sacrifice for sin. (Heb. ix. 14.)

The object of Christ's *life* on earth was, doubtless, to manifest God the Father—“the life was the light of men”—not to fulfil the broken law on man's behalf, not to *acquire* a righteousness by keeping God's law, yet to magnify that law, and make it honourable.

Guilty man could not be justified by law-keeping.

The violated laws of the holy God must be satisfied. So He, the Christ of God, comes to do His will, "by the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." He, the Lamb of God, comes forth to sustain for guilty man the penalties of the violated laws of God.

"Now to him that believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Rom. iv. 5.)

The believing sinner counteth Christ Jesus as his answer to God for his guilt. He has nothing to say, nothing to urge, save "He loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Thus God giveth, and the believing sinner accrediteth, Christ as "righteousness." The full requirement of God, the full need of the sinner, is met by the one answer, "Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us righteousness."

But God seeketh for more than a mere covering over, a mere robing in the garments of righteousness. He looketh for an essential, an intrinsic righteousness.

Now he that believeth in Christ is not merely a pardoned soul, but, through virtue of Christ risen from the dead, he becomes a new creature, a re-created being; putting off the old man as a vile, condemned thing; putting on the new, "which is *after God* created *in righteousness* and true holiness." (Eph. iv. 24; Col. iii. 9, 10.) This is not by his own will or perseverance in good, but by virtue of Him who raised up Christ from the dead, and who raiseth up from the state of sin and death every one believing in Him.

This is as true of the youngest believer as of the aged saint. (See Rom. v. 3-7; Col. i. 12, 14.) Christ risen from the dead is the "life-giving Spirit." (1 Cor. xv. 48.) In Him is the new life, eternal life—that life which hath righteousness as its moral power.

"What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the

likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin" (or by giving Him as a sacrifice for sin), "condemned sin in the flesh: *that* the righteousness (*δικαιοσυνη*) of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets the believer free from the law of sin and death.

Again. God provides in Christ a source of righteousness to meet the need of the justified sinner. "In Him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him."

So far, then, as to the source of righteousness, whereby God is glorified before all. Wherein, then, lies the element of weakness that preventeth every renewed soul from practically exhibiting in every detail of life the holy, godly example of Christ, the Lord his righteousness?

"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 heavenly places." We are weak; strong only as *abiding sensibly* in the position God has placed us in—"in Christ." This is our vantage-ground, and the enemy knows it; therefore he seeks to hide from the children of God the truth as to their position, and as to their limitless power of holiness and righteousness in Christ—as to His power "to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think;" suggesting to us to trust in ourselves, our experience, our profession, our name—anything, in short, to keep us from lowly dependence on our living Lord; and thus we become practically feeble. Again, through the flesh, he worketh, and through the world, seeking to find us off our guard, and then suggesting the lawfulness of things unlawful, alluring, as "*an angel of light*," unwary souls.

The word abounds with solemn warning against Satan's devices, against the ways of the world and the flesh.

Practical righteousness and holiness of life is God's aim in redeeming us; for "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

This, however, is not all. God looketh for His people to be *a portion* unto Him, a delight, a gratification; but righteousness and holiness are the foundation of that portion—the *cause*, the exciting cause, of delight.

We shall then be practically righteous, by leaning on, by looking to, Jesus our ascended Saviour, "who is able to preserve even to the uttermost" all His own. Abiding in Him, we shall bring forth fruit to God; without Him (*i.e.*, apart from abiding in Him) we cannot bear fruit.

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

ABRAHAM ALONE WITH GOD.

(GENESIS XV.)

IN Genesis xiv. we see Abraham carrying himself in beautiful faith before the Lord. He went to the battle when the danger of his kinsman called him there, and in the strength of God he rescued him; and then, on his return, he accepted the pledges of a conqueror's reward from the hand of God's servant, but refused all present portion from the hand of the world's representative. His path is perfect before the Lord.

We cannot but know the value of obedience in preparing the soul for communion. It surely has this holy virtue in it. Obedience, conscious integrity, holy acknowledgment of the Lord in our ways, blessedly keeps the soul in readiness for communion; as we read, "If ye love me, keep my commandments, and I will

pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter;" and again, "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." (John xiv.)

So we find it here. Abraham had been in obedience; his faith through Genesis xiv. had been perfect before God. And we find here, in chap. xv., his communion or intercourse with God to be perfect also, manifesting the most striking, holy correspondency of mind between the Lord and His servant. He had kept the words of God, and now God was, as it were, making His abode with him.

This intercourse is opened by the Lord, and opened too in a way according to this integrity in Abraham, of which I have been speaking. Abraham had in the battle been trusting God as his shield, and after the battle received Him as his only reward, and according to his faith it is unto him. The Lord will now give him the happy assurance that all this precious faith was abundantly warranted. Such are the sure and appropriate joys of faith; all it counts upon it gets, with sweet assurances from the word or Spirit of God, like the poor sinner in the Pharisee's house, who counted on forgiveness, and got it with a token. (Luke vii.)

But it is not only in this word of approval that we see Abraham enjoying the fruit of his obedience; we find, as I observed, an easy, unforced intercourse opened between him and the Lord. The Lord had said, "*I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward!*" Blessed this was; but it left desires still in the heart of Abraham unsatisfied. He had no child; and what were all gifts and honours to Abraham while he was childless, and while his house, and name, and inheritance, were likely to be established in a servant, and not in a son?

Was all this slighting the word of the Lord? Was

this making little of the promise that God would be his shield and his reward? No. To the mere ear of man it may appear so; but the whole intercourse here forbids the thought. The Lord's ear tries it, and finds it expressive of quite another thing. The Lord at once approves it, and honours it, and relieves this thought of Abraham, which thus left him unsatisfied, though in the midst of gifts and promises.

Abraham felt that no promises or honours would satisfy him as long as a servant was his heir. Now all this is entirely according to God. Our God desires that, above all things, we should value *the standing of our persons as children*; that we should esteem the spirit of adoption, or of liberty, as the choicest item in our list of prerogatives, the want of which would make all inheritance or glory an unsatisfying good. This was Abraham's mind, and the Lord delighted to find it so, and at once promises him a son.

Our standing as children is the sweetest and deepest truth of all. To *consent to be a servant* is deeply grieving to the mind of God. This is shown by the indignant answer of the Holy Ghost to those who were going back to the law, or spirit of bondage, and deserting the liberty of children, which the gospel had brought them. (See Gal.) Is God's grace to be so little set by? Is acceptance "in the Beloved" so little to be valued? Are we to do what we can to blot out *the Father* from the great economy of divine love? This cannot be. God must resent this attempt, as He does eminently among the Galatians.

God has fixed it as His purpose; He has settled it to be His own joy, to have *children* and not *servants* in His house for ever; to have *the scene of glory* by and by filled, not with the spirit of bondage or fear, but with the spirit of liberty and of adoption. It is His own gracious divine gratification. It would not do for Him even to gather praise here, if He did not gather it from children. Abraham's desire for a *child*

(unsatisfied with the presence of a *servant*) exactly corresponded with the desire of God Himself.

It is our duty to magnify *grace*, and make it honourable. Christ alone did this with *law*, but we are to do this with *the grace of God*. That is really the sweetest, most acceptable fruit we can offer to our God and Father. This valuing of our standing as sons; this tasting that even glory itself would be no glory without it; this experiencing that to have a shield and a reward in God, if we had not a *Father* in God, would not do; that though we might have large inheritance as His gift, yet, if that were to be enjoyed by us as servants, or as Eliezer of Damascus, and not as children, all would not satisfy. This shows that we value what God Himself values. This shows that we are in blessed companionship with His own thoughts, and have our souls fashioned by His Spirit.

The ground of Abraham's righteousness before God is also brought out; he believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. He believed Him to be a quickener of the dead; that is, he left the whole *work* in the hand of the Lord, and consequently the whole glory. (Rom. iv.) He took the place of a consciously dead sinner, and as debtor to divine love and power altogether for righteousness or life. He had walked by faith already; he had conquered by faith already; he had looked to the glory already as his only portion; but now comes the occasion for manifesting that principle, even faith in God as a quickener of the dead, for which he was accepted as righteous.

Let our services be what they may, they do not justify. As in the case of the poor sinner in Luke vii., she loved, and loved much, but it was not her love, but her faith which saved her. So here with Abraham. Affections towards Christ, and single-eyed services to Him have gone on, but all such did not justify. The leaving of Ur, the conquests of Chedor-

laomer, the rejection of the offers of Sodom, did not make him righteous, but his *faith* in God who quickens the dead.

The standing of Abraham's house being thus fixed, the question of *the person* being settled, we turn to that of *the inheritance*. And here we may notice the same intimacy between the Lord and Abraham. There was still that easy and unforced flow of mind and communication between them, which, as I have already observed, ever comes from the soul of the saint having been found perfect with God.

The Lord promises Abraham the land where he then dwelt, for an inheritance. Abraham asks, How shall I know that I shall inherit it? This is not to be read as the language of doubt. The whole intercourse here forbids that thought, as before we were forbidden to judge that Abraham was slighting God as his shield and reward. This was not the language of *doubt*, but of *desire*. The same words were *doubt* on the lips of Zachariah, and Gabriel resents them as such; but here, instead of resentment, there is approval and gratification. The ear of the Lord again tested these words, and found them to be *desire* and not *doubt*, and therefore He at once sets Himself to gratify or answer them.

Abraham wanted to read his title to such rich promises; he desired to look into the divine witnesses for all this; it was delight in the promise that made him thus search after the ground of it. This is very natural. We find ourselves in a wealthy place; we desirously trace the path that brought us there. It is like a believer occupying his happy thoughts about the virtue of the blood of Jesus. It is not that he doubts that virtue; he feels it in his conscience, and because he feels it there, he likes to look at it, and enquire into it, and search out that wondrous thing that has such a charm in it.

So here with Abraham—it is because he valued the

promised inheritance that he now asks, "Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" and because our God delights in our valuing of His promises, He immediately sets Himself to answer Abraham's desire.

But in the Lord here answering Abraham about his title to the inheritance, we have some great principles of truth unfolded. First, we see a sacrifice ordered by the Lord, and prepared by His servant, thus telling us that every thing rests on the ground of a sacrifice, that we can receive nothing except through the blood of the great Sacrifice, and on the ground of the Lamb slain. We live and are glorified by that, our only title. We are sons by it. We are heirs by it. We feast now on it, thus owning our life to be bought by blood; and we shall take the glory by and by in the name of the same blood.

This is the first grand and leading truth presented in this deeply interesting scene; and, according to this, Abraham's only duty and service was to watch the sacrifice. So with us; we must jealously preserve the purity of the Sacrifice of the precious Lamb of God; for it is our title to everything. We have to watch, lest any touch it; the fowls of the air must not light on it; the unclean things must not soil its pure and cleansing virtues; any one that would meddle with it must be frayed away.

All this has great interest for our hearts; but there is more. We learn not only thus the nature of our title to the inheritance, and our duty till the inheritance itself come, but also the character in which we ourselves are to go into the inheritance. It is as *dead and risen ones*. In no other character can we enter the inheritance, as by no other title than that of the blood of the Lamb can we have claim to it. This is now shown to Abraham. A deep sleep and horror of great darkness falls upon him, and he is told, that ere his seed can enjoy the land, they must be bondmen and strangers; be afflicted in another land for four hundred

years; but that afterwards they should come forth with great substance into this place of promised inheritance.

All this was very significant. The deep sleep falls on him, and the horror of great darkness; even as his seed was to go through the bondage and afflictions of Egypt: so also the day dawns again on Abraham after this night of deep sleep and horror, even as Israel afterwards came forth (like a people in resurrection, full of substance, not a feeble person among them, and the glory of the Lord hovering over them) from their long, dark sleep in Egypt, that place of graves and of death to them, under their brick-kilns and task-masters.

This tells us the character in which the heir of God goes into his inheritance. Whether it be Israel's inheritance in Canaan, Christ's inheritance of all things, or the church's in Him, and by Him, still it is in this one character of a dead and risen people that we enter severally upon our glories and possessions. The sleep may be for a night, and the sun go down, and the smoking furnace show itself, but the burning lamp will follow, and usher in the day of the covenant, when the land of the inheritance and of the glory shall be made sure for ever.

The Lord then seals His covenant, His covenant granting this inheritance; but it is a covenant of promise only. It is not one upon conditions; it is not one in which Abraham has to do anything; it is a covenant of promise simply, the Lord being the giver, and Abraham the receiver. And according to this, it is only God who seals it. Abraham puts no seal to it. Abraham undertakes nothing; he simply receives the promise.

God's representative, the burning lamp, the symbol of salvation (Isa. lxii. 1), and in that sense the symbol of Jesus, passes through the pieces of the sacrifice; and the land, with all its appurtenances, is made sure by God to Abraham, without conditions. The grant of it rests on the covenanted promise of God. (Jer.

xxxiv. 18, 19.) The blood of Jesus sustaining the praise of God, as the great munificent giver of it, and establishing likewise the joy, the certain joy, of the poor sinner in the sure and conscious possession of it.

Thus we have great secrets and great counsels of God told out in this wondrous chapter; and we might have expected this from the character of the communion here, and the intimacy of mind that we may have seen subsisting between the Lord and His servant.

There remain, however, as I judge, two other secrets still to be listened to. Abraham's seed was not to get immediate possession of the land; for they were to go through their previous affliction in a land of strangers. But not only so; the Lord says to him, "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." The Amorites were the holders of the promised land; and Israel was not to go in and possess themselves of their possessions till they had filled up the measure of their sin. This is another secret of the Lord here disclosed.

We have not space here to look at the full illustration of this in other Scriptures, but may just observe, that it is this which still detains the Lord in the heavens. He does not yet descend, as He will in judgment, because He is long-suffering and patient, not hastily laying hold on vengeance, as of old He did not come down in answer to the cry from Sodom, nor to visit the tower which the children of men in their rebellion were raising, till iniquity was ripened.

Then we further observe the word of the Lord to Abraham about his own personal place in all this promised and unfolded scene of glory—in the distant inheritance "thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age." These words tell Abraham a secret immediately touching himself. His seed was to have the land; but he himself to be gathered to his fathers.

What this meant, or what was to be Abraham's por-

tion in this distant promised joy, was not made clear to him; but in the increased light of further revelations we have reason to know that Abraham's is the higher or heavenly department of glory. We see him taken in company with others to the glory. This was the true gathering of Abraham to his fathers. Such words may have another or more primary sense. I question not that. But in this further unfolding of the mind of God we see the real gathering of Abraham, and of all who like him stand in testimony to Jesus in the world that rejects Him still. (Acts vii.) It is a gathering to Christ in heaven.

We may say, therefore, that great secrets are declared in this chapter. It was a time of blessed intimacy between God and His elect one, and some of the deep things of His bosom therefore came forth. May our souls be formed by the power of these truths, and not merely our thoughts engage themselves about them! And may we know, as Abraham did, the communion for which walk with God prepares the soul! May we more love Him, more keep His words, and thus more enjoy His sensible manifestation and abiding with us!

Nothing between, Lord, nothing between :

Let me Thy glory see ;

Draw my soul close to Thee,

Then speak in love to me--

Nothing between.

Nothing between, Lord, nothing between :

Let not earth's din and noise

Stifle Thy still small voice,

In it let me rejoice--

Nothing between.

Nothing between, Lord, nothing between :

Till thine eternal light,

Rising on earth's dark night,

Bursts on my open sight--

Nothing between.