

THE
BELIEVER'S PATHWAY.

VOLUME VI.

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THE
Believer's Pathway.

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"REDEEMING THE TIME."

—
"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psa. xc. 12).
—

WHEN God set the two great lights in the firmament of the heaven, He said, "And let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years" (Gen i. 14). And when, long after, He smelled the sweet savour of Noah's burnt-offering, He declared that "while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. viii. 22). Surely, then, as day and night succeed each other, as moons wax and wane, and as the years roll round, oh how swiftly! our God is continually calling us to remember His long-suffering mercy to a world

of guilty sinners, that, as yet, judgment has not fallen upon them; and His special mercy to us, His redeemed ones, that this lengthened-out day of His grace is our priceless opportunity for doing Him service that He will not fail to own and reward. The close of a year, then, and the commencement of a fresh one, may well lead us to pray for ourselves the prayer of Moses, the man of God, with which we have commenced this page. And we may ask ourselves, how are we to number our days? Moses spoke of the allotted span of man's life as three-score years and ten (ver. 10); but in the opening words of the Psalm his thoughts are carried back to the time before the world was formed, and he remembers that the eternal God is the dwelling place of His people. So, at the close of the Psalm, he looks on to

the time when, not only shall the glory of the Lord appear unto His people, but His beauty shall be upon them, and their work shall be established. How short the little moment of our time down here, when thus we look back and look on. But, oh, how unspeakably important we see it to be, when we understand that it is the one opportunity for fulfilling those "good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. ii. 10). With clearer perception even than Moses, we can look back to discern God's eternal purpose concerning us; and can look forward to the day when the beauty of the Lord our God shall be upon us. And is not this the way in which God teaches to number our days? "Surely I come quickly" is the last, even as it is the sweetest, of all the promises of His precious word; and how it should stimulate us to more diligent and whole-hearted obedience. His beauty shall be upon us then, for "we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall

see Him as He is" (1 John iii. 2). And the work of our hands shall be established then, for all that was truly done to Him shall abide the test of that day; and has He not said, "Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. xxii. 12)? It is, then, by looking, not at the seen things of time, but at the unseen things of eternity, that we are to learn rightly to number our days. Moses was oppressed with the present affliction, and he speaks of man's years as labour and sorrow; but immediately after his prayer in verse 12, how his heart gets lifted up. The very labour and sorrow of those years shall be found to praise and honour and glory; and God shall make His people glad according to the days wherein they were afflicted. Just like this is the blessed assurance of 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. With our eyes on Him who is from everlasting to everlasting, the light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of

glory." The year 1884 has passed away, but its record remains before God. Were its days numbered and valued according to the heavenly standard? Did the thought of the past eternity in which God chose us and of the coming eternity, when we shall behold His face and be satisfied with His mercy, cause us to use each moment so as to please Him? Let us consider those marvellous thirty three years of the life of the Lord Jesus on earth. Not one moment of those years but was spent in accomplishing what God had planned concerning Him; while all the time His soul was sustained with the joy that was set before Him. The might of the eternity behind and the eternity before was all to be seen in those brief years of His time down here. "So teach *us*, O Lord, to number *our* days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

—:o:—

"SEE then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. v. 16, 17).

COURTSHIP.

WE were talking one day with a servant of God, who had a true shepherd's heart, and who was untiring in his watchful care for the flock of God, when he made the following remark: "When once our young people get engaged, my experience is that there is little good can be done with them till after they are married. For the time they seem to give themselves up to selfish enjoyment of one another's company, and to forget the claims of God upon them." We should be sorry to say that this is our universal experience; but we cannot deny that it tallies sadly with what we have seen ourselves, again and again. We would seek help of God, therefore, to say a few plain but loving words about this matter, especially to our younger brethren and sisters. And remember, we are not now speaking about the unequal companionship of believers with unbelievers. Where the plain commandment of God is disre-

garded, and God's child can find congenial company with the unsaved, it is evident that the heart has wandered far from God already, and that the wanderer is on the high road to open back-sliding. But we are rather thinking of the companionships of those who are children of God; and we would ask the question, why, among such, it so frequently happens that the time of courtship is a time when the word and service of God are neglected, and love for Christ ebbs very low? Probably, in most cases, the beginning of the heart-wandering dates further back than on-lookers suppose. Indeed, we are convinced that, could the whole truth be known, it would be found that many an ill-assorted and unhappy union, had its beginning at a time when the relish for God's word had been nearly lost, and diligence in happy service for the Master had sadly slackened. At such times the soul is always ready for selfish indulgence, and young people spend an amount of time in each other's company, that would

be impossible if they were occupied in a healthful manner. This leads on to an engagement to be married, about which there had been little waiting upon God, and little consideration of the deeply solemn responsibilities connected with such a step. And is it surprising if the marriage, thus contracted, is productive, neither of happiness to the individuals nor of glory to God? Even of those who are married, it is written, "The time is short; it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none" (1 Cor. vii. 29); reminding us that God does not suffer His children to settle down to the enjoyment of an earthly home, or to forget that they are pilgrims and strangers here. Surely then this holds good, when the responsibilities of married life have not yet been entered upon. Happy the husband and wife who can look back to the time before their marriage, and thank God that, by His grace, they never allowed their delight in one another's society to interfere with anything that God claimed from

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them. But, alas, how often it is otherwise. William begins to neglect the prayer-meeting, and when asked about it, he says, "Why, you see, it is the only night in the week that Mary has to herself; and we can't see that we are doing any harm in spending it together." Or perhaps Emma tells the superintendent of the Sunday School that she thinks of giving up her class. The children have got so unruly lately that she cannot manage them at all, and she thinks some one else had better try. The superintendent fears that something more is at the bottom of it; and it is all explained when, a week or two later, as he is going home from afternoon school, he meets Emma and James returning from a walk in the park. There is the same excuse as in the other case. It is their only opportunity for a little time together, and so the work of God gets the go-bye. When the prayer-meeting is neglected, or the Sunday School class is forsaken, in order to get time for one another's society, is it likely that the conver-

sation will be conducive to their mutual profit? Indeed not. For if they were in a state of soul to enjoy the things of God, they would be at the prayer-meeting together; or, Emma would be continuing her labour of love among the little ones, while James kept his place in the young men's class. True, their time for talk might be cut short by more than one half; but the sweetness of real fellowship together in the Lord would far more than make up to them for the self-denial exercised. In every relation of life the Lord has given us a wonderful heavenly pattern to show us how we should behave ourselves; and, in regard to this particular matter, we shall not find that He has failed us. We often speak of Christ and the Church under the scripture figure of a bridegroom and a bride. But we are rather apt to forget that all this present time is the time of our betrothal. The marriage of the Lamb has not yet come. But whether it be the present waiting time of our betrothal, or the full delight and

dignity of our completed union, when we shall sit down with Him upon His throne; equally, under all circumstances, the Son fails not to honour the Father. The bride for whom He gave Himself is the bride that the Father gave to Him; and He never forgets that in all His thoughts about her. It is not we only who are waiting: He waits as well. "Surely, I come quickly" is not spoken merely for our assurance and encouragement; it is the rapturous utterance of His own heart, and tells out all His soul's intensest longing. Eighteen hundred years ago, He came to give Himself for the Church on Calvary's awful cross. Ever since then He has been waiting at the right hand of the Father, till the Father's time has come that He should return to take us to Himself. Who can tell the obedient patience of that waiting, no less pleasing to God than the obedience of His sufferings? And what a pattern to us during the patience of a betrothal, until the marriage time be come. But then the Lord Jesus knows that

the Father has given us to Him, and that His prayer in John xvii. 24, shall surely be answered. Here is the secret of all true patience and self-denial. It is the lack of any such confidence in the case of many an engagement lightly entered into, that robs the individuals of any power patiently to wait God's time. The whole matter is treated with so little seriousness; and a companionship that was commenced with utter levity goes on till it ends in marriage, without ever having been the subject of prayer or even of sober thought. And are not older Christians often to blame here? There is so much unseemly jesting about the whole matter, that it is little wonder if younger believers act lightly about it. Quite true, the older saints will speak wisely enough about marriage itself; but marriage never comes about, without a previous stage, shorter or longer. If God is not honoured from the first, the mischief is often past undoing. If, when young believers are first seen to seek one another's society, in-

stead of jokes and raillery, older ones, who have influence with them, would seek to exercise their consciences before God about what they were doing, what different results might be looked for. Dear young believers, do not fail to seek the guidance of God in such a matter; and, when you are assured that God has given you to each other, let the remembrance that you are both His, guide and control all your behaviour, one to another. Neither would then forsake a single responsibility, or wish the other to do so; and, while this will involve no little self-denial, it will make the whole companionship sweet with a joy utterly unknown to those who abandon themselves to selfish indulgence. —:o:—

IF the rebukes of the faithful word be like the "piercings of a sword," if the conscience be stirred or troubled, there is ever the ready and blessed provision of the precious blood that "cleanseth from all sin." The same light that searches and exposes to ourselves the evil within, shows the blood of sprinkling, so that the heart may not be brought into bondage again, but kept in peace, and the conscience continually purged.

A NEW-YEAR'S MOTTO.

"EVERMORE THINE."

EVERMORE Thine, O how blest
are the fetters
Which bind me so closely, dear
Master, to Thee;
Claiming my heart with its fullest allegiance,
Bound evermore, and yet always so free.

Thine, all for Thee, to be used in Thy service;
Thine, Thine alone, would I henceforward
be;
Thine, to be kept for Thy glory and honour;
Thine, for Thou gavest Thy life-blood for
me.

Thine, yes, to Thee, time and talents devoted,
Every one willingly laid at Thy feet;
All for Thy service, my Lord, my Redeemer,
Wilt Thou not use them as Thou seest
meet.

Thine, only Thine; in the year that is
opening,
Draw me yet closer, dear Saviour, to Thee;
Till Thy blest image within me Thou perfect,
So may the world see Thyself, and not me.

Evermore Thine, through Eternity's ages,
Praising the One I have loved for so long;
There in the light of Thy glorious presence—
*Thou hast redeemed me, shall still be my
song.*

GLENVAR.

"OF ONE ACCORD."

IN Phil. ii. 2, the Apostle Paul besought the believers to be "of one accord." In other words, he entreated them to act in all matters in divine unanimity. In the Acts of the Apostles, there are some precious and practical examples of how this most important precept should be carried out. "They were all with one accord in one place" (Acts ii. 2). How sadly this is lacking to-day among Christians. We may be in "one place" together, but if this is all, it is a sorrowful thing indeed. Saints may be together *bodily*, while their *spirits* are asunder. We are living in days of increasing dangers, and this is one of them. The Lord enable us to "watch and pray" against this growing evil. He desires oneness in heart to be manifested among us, and if this is lacking, we have but the shell without the kernel; the form of right things, devoid of the power. Were the saints at the beginning surrounded by enemies without,

and threatened on every hand, what was their stronghold, their refuge? Prayer and supplication to God with "one accord" (Acts iv. 24). Thus could they

"Move the Hand which moves the world,
To bring deliverance down."

Did Satan change his tactics, and instigate any within to cause trouble? The apostles and elders (with the church) could help them, being of "one accord" (Acts xv. 25). Guided by the Holy Spirit, and in harmony with God's Word, they could counsel and advise. That none to-day can act with such authority as they, may be a fact, but is not this a precedent for us in some respects? Could not "chief men among the brethren" (see Acts xv. 22), in the various assemblies of our time, do much to help in times of trial, if they did but act with "one accord"? Independency and isolated action can only be productive of evil and sorrow. The Lord stir up the hearts of such to see the importance of this; for their counsel in troubles that arise

is invaluable, and fraught with blessing; when they have the glory of Christ and the true welfare of His people at heart. May we all covet "oneness of mind," endeavouring "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Thus shall our own spirits be more and more cemented together, and our fellowship be seen in increasing power and heavenly love.

THE STEPS OF "TRUE HOLINESS."

"**S**AUL of Tarsus," the eager, zealous persecutor of the followers of Jesus Christ, was converted to God A.D. 35, some two years after the descent of the Holy Spirit. Lying in utter prostration upon the road leading to Damascus, humbled by divine power, he tremblingly spoke thus—

- 1st. "Who art Thou, Lord?" (Acts ix. 5).
- 2nd. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (ver. 6).

Here we have two things beautifully interwoven—viz., personal acquaintance with Jesus, and divinely-created zeal. Thus it is with Paul's memorable saying, when speaking of Christ, "Whose I am, and Whom I serve" (Acts xxvii. 23). For thirty-one years, with ever-increasing fervour of spirit, did Paul continue in the service of Him whom it was his delight to honour and obey. Difficulties innumerable and varied hindered him not; and upon the threshold of eternity, he could review his career with triumph and humble satisfaction. Truly he was "a pattern" man, and may we all seek to follow him as he followed Christ. Among other references to himself in his epistles, there are three special utterances which have been frequently referred to, and which we may profitably remind ourselves of again. They mark important stages in the experience of his soul, and are calculated to convey helpful lessons to all believers. The following will show at a glance what we refer to:—

PAUL'S ESTIMATE OF HIMSELF.

No. of years after Conversion.	<p>SERVICE. (1 Cor. xv. 9.)</p>
24	<p>“I am the least of the Apostles.”</p> <p>This marks a holy stage of experience.</p>
	<p>RELATIONSHIP. (Eph. iii. 8.)</p>
29	<p>“Who am less than the least of all saints.”</p> <p>Here we have a holier thing still.</p>
	<p>SINNERSHIP. (1 Tim. i. 15.)</p>
30	<p>“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”</p> <p>This is the holiest utterance of them all.</p>

What is the conclusion, then? Is it not that the nearer he approached the light of God, the darker became his opinion of himself, and the less boastful he was in his attainments. There is much talk of “holiness” in our time, which would at once reveal its spurious character if the heavenly touchstone were applied to it. Christ, in all his patience, obedience, and

perfect humility, is God's standard of perfection and holiness. Brethren, let us aspire to copy Him, and where will our boastings be? Thrown to the winds. And conscious of our many shortcomings, weighing ourselves in the balances of the sanctuary, our individual exclamation would be, “I abhor myself . . . in dust and ashes” (Job xlii. 6). The morning of our perfection and unsullied holiness will soon dawn; for, by the power of Christ in His coming, shall we be glorified and made like Himself. Till that time, as diligent and apt scholars in the Master's school, may our language be—

“Oh make us each more holy!
In spirit pure and meek;
More like to heavenly citizens,
As more of heaven we speak.”

—:o:—

CORRUPTION, strong as it is, has its source in the creature, and can only be fed by the creature. Grace, however weak it may be, has its source in God, and will be fed and nourished by God. Dare we doubt which is destined to prevail?

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER.

[We are grateful for permission given us to insert the following, believing that God will use the incidents it records to stir the hearts of many to diligence in gospel labours, and to patience in enduring persecution for Christ's sake. We omit names of persons and places, and the initials used are only for the sake of distinction. The writer is a sister in the Lord, a true help-meet in the gospel with her husband.]

IT would be, I think, three weeks to-night, when we went out after tea, along a street or two, down under a very dark archway, into a wood-yard, round a corner, through three little gardens, one leading into the next, and each with a little gate to open and shut, and at last reached the little house we were making for. "Mr. B. in?" Yes, it's Mr. B. himself who opens the door. "Come in and sit down; but it'll be warmer in the kitchen though." Mr. B. is a Christian who has been accustomed to address crowds in the Salvation Army, which he has just left; but, I must not be tempted into telling his story, or you will be tired before I've done. His wife

came in, a tall, thin, rather care-worn looking woman. Mr. G. soon began to talk to her about her soul, and found she was not saved. She listened very attentively, and seemed to take in the gospel; but told us afterwards it was not until the next day, when alone, that she really trusted the Lord Jesus as her own Saviour. Talking to her and her husband, it was past ten when we found ourselves in the street again, with our faces homewards.

Now, I want to show you an example of how the Lord owns and uses His children when they are faithful to Himself.

Mr. S., one of the two men who began last June to meet simply in the name of the Lord, in this town, had an unsaved wife, one who was bitterly opposed to the truth, and persecuted him, until he has been known to say he would as soon stay in the room between meetings, as go home to tea; and Mrs. S. and Mrs. B. were great friends.

About a week after Mrs. B.'s

conversion, there was a tea one Saturday for those in fellowship and their friends, and for any who had been recently saved. Mrs. S. was asked, but would not come. No one should say she could come for a *tea*, but not to the meetings. Poor Mrs. B. looked round, hoping to see her old friend, but she was not there. This grieved her, and she determined that next week she would call and see her, and invite her to come with her to the meetings. Next day was the Lord's-day; and, at nine in the morning, Mrs. B. was going to obey the Lord in baptism. Mrs. S. heard of it, and determined to go and see her. It was a new and strange sight for her, and moved her so much, that she walked home alone, in tears; deeply convinced of sin, through seeing her old friend follow the Lord in the figure of death and resurrection. As she told us afterwards, to give you her own words, "On my way home that morning, I cried, and resolved to be kinder to my husband; but when he came home, I was worse

than ever. I called him for everything, but he never answered me. He never gave me a wrong word all the twelve years we've been married; but this day I seemed as if I could not help myself. I told him every one hated him; no one liked his ways, even the people at the baptism didn't; and at last he took his chair, and sat in the other room by himself. When I opened the door, I could hear him praying, and I did feel sorry, and I thought I will speak kindly at tea; but when he came out to tea, I saw he had been crying, and I was worse than ever; though as I looked up, when he did not see me, I was grieved to see his poor cheeks. But I would not be friends, not even when he came to me to say 'good-bye' before he went to the meeting; but, when he went out, didn't I have a good cry?"

Matters were in this state,—the Lord having prepared the way,—when, during the week, Mrs. B. resolved to call. On reaching the top of the street, she stood a moment, half trembling to go,

remembering how together they used to laugh at anyone calling with tracts, and afraid that now Mrs. S. would laugh at *her*. So, while she stood, she prayed that she might be received without a sneer. She knocked at the door, and immediately a voice from the top window called out, "Mary, is that you?" No laughing,—so glad to see her,—the Lord had been there first. During that week, Mrs. S. came with Mrs. B. to a meeting, and on the following Lord's day she was present again at 9 in the morning, at a Baptism. She was out again in the afternoon and in the evening. Mr. E. was preaching in the evening, and after the meeting he sat and spoke a long time with her about her soul. She told him what a state she had been in, of a dream she had had, and of texts her husband had brought home that had troubled her, especially "Be sure your sin will find you out;" and before leaving, she trusted Christ and received 'everlasting life.' Mr. E. seemed greatly pleased, and when

he told me, he saw I looked doubtful, for she had been such a character. How faithless! Her husband too, rejoiced with trembling, and said at first he felt as if he was walking on very thin ice. On Monday, Mrs. S. came to the Women's Meeting, held in the house of a Christian, and looking round, she remarked, "Why, I was born in this house; my mother lived in it for 17 years." "Well," said a sister in the Lord present, "It'll be nice, Mrs. S., if you are born again in it to-day." "No," said Mrs. S., "that cannot be, I was born again last night." That night she was at the gospel meeting again, very happy, and as I spoke to her, she said, "Will you come to tea tomorrow, Mrs. G.? I am not afraid to look him (Mr. G.) in the face now; and come *Thursday too*." We went on Tuesday, and found her rejoicing in the Lord. Her next-door neighbour said to her, "You're looking very happy, Mrs. S., singing away, what's up with you?" "Well I may look happy," was her reply, "I'm a King's

daughter!" And she told us, "as I turned the mangle, I seemed to be doing it, not for my husband, nor for myself, but for the Lord, with those words in my ears,— 'For me, Lord Jesus, Thou hast died, and I have died in Thee.'" She had been very proud of her clean home. "Oh, yes," she said to Mr. S., "I always swept under the mats, even before I was saved; but now I am willing to give up house and all for Jesus. I have been a good servant to the devil, and I want to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Another result of her conversion too, was this: Thirteen years ago, when she was a servant in a public-house, a drunken man came in, and gave her a five-shilling-piece and a halfpenny for a glass of beer, instead of three-halfpence; and she pocketed the five-shilling-piece, and gave the three-halfpence to her mistress. Now, she remembered the circumstance, though so many years had passed, and did not rest until the old man, now in the "Union," had had his five shillings restored.

NEARER TO THEE.

IT is a sure sign of growth in the divine life, that there is ever a desire for a closer walk with God.

"Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee,
E'en though it be a cross,
That raiseth me."

Such is the language of faith—"not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after" (Phil. iii. 12). God's people go "from strength to strength" (Psa. lxxxiv. 7). They are daily receiving "grace for grace," or grace upon grace; for "whosoever hath, to him shall be given" (Luke viii. 18). It is true that we are abundantly satisfied with the fatness of God's house; yet, at the same time, if walking in the communion of the Holy Spirit, our soul panteth after God as the heart after the water brooks, and, like Paul, our desire is "*that I may know Him* and the power of His resurrection" (Phil. iii. 9).

NEHEMIAH'S ENEMIES.

NEHEMIAH'S enemies tried to weaken his hands by offering to help him in building the wall of Jerusalem; but this failed. Nehemiah was on his guard, and he refused their help. The enemy then came out in his true colours, and openly opposed the work. Satan observes the same tactics still, whenever a soul is born into the kingdom. A young convert is in great danger of being hugged to death by the carcases of the world. Satan comes as an angel of light, and would fain *help* the believer on in the divine life! Let us not be ignorant of his devices. The kindness and flattery of the world have made havoc of many who have had grace to withstand its persecution. "Meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips" (Prov. xx. 19). If, like Nehemiah, we are walking in fellowship with God, we shall have that heavenly discernment which alone can detect the workings of the great enemy of souls.

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Vol. 6.

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

THE Samaritan, in the tenth chapter of Luke's gospel, had probably passed by the houses of many of the rich and great that day, but they had no need of him, and he did not delay his journey to call on them. No sooner, however, does he see the poor wounded stranger left to die by the roadside, than his heart is filled with compassion for him. That dying man's deep need makes him neighbour to the Samaritan, and the Samaritan owns the claim at once by dismounting from his beast, and stooping down to minister to the poor sufferer. Is not this a beautiful, though but faint, picture of the compassion and love of God? God delights to take the neighbour's place, and oh! how wonderfully He fulfils

its obligations. Neighbour means the next one, the nearest one; and that just describes what God is. Man, as a sinner, has got far away from God, and God is always true to His character as the neighbour, for He follows on the track of the wanderer, and is close at hand to restore and to save. When the sinner first wakes up to a sense of what a terrible distance he has wandered from God, he thinks he will have to retrace all that long path before he can find God. He looks forward to a long time of weary toil, and hopes that God will receive him at the end of it. But could there be a greater mistake? All the while God is close at hand; and the first moment that the poor sinner's heart turns to God, he finds God at his very side. Why, it was God that woke him up to know his need. The


sinner was truly very far from God, and yet God was quite close to the sinner. We get it all in Luke xv. The lost sheep never found its way back to the Shepherd, but the Shepherd followed the poor sheep, until He found it. The prodigal thought he must go a long journey, and then make a bargain about hired service; but "while he was yet *a great way off*," there was his father, with embraces and tears of joy, come out to welcome him as a son, and not to hire him as a servant. The lawyer, who came tempting the Lord in Luke x., correctly answered that the law required a man to love God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself; but when the Lord told him to do this and live, he endeavoured to justify himself by asking, "Who is my neighbour?" He little understood that his need was of one who should act the neighbour's part of love and mercy to him, a poor, lost sinner; and the Lord seems to put the whole question in a different light when he asks at the end of His story,

"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour to him that fell among the thieves?" Well might the poor lawyer seek to escape from the difficulty he was placed in, when he was told to love God with all his might, and his neighbour as himself, as the condition of receiving life. But, like many a one to-day, he does not perceive that the only way out of his dilemma must be in finding one who can help him in his utter helplessness. So instead of asking, "Where is there one who will be neighbour to me, a poor, lost sinner?" he enquires who is the neighbour that he must endeavour to assist. It is good to turn and contemplate the Lord Jesus Himself, as perfectly fulfilling that commandment that was so "exceeding broad." However broad the commandment, it cannot exceed the infinite ability of the blessed Son of God to fulfil its utmost claim. And the cross of Calvary is the very climax of His obedience to each of the two great divisions of the law. Let us listen to a few of

His words in John x.: "As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. . . . Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This *commandment* have I received of My Father" (see verses 15 to 18). That laying down of His life was the evidence of His love to the Father, whose *commandment* He was thus obeying, and to the sheep, for whom He gave Himself. He loved God with *all* His heart, and His neighbour, not simply *as* Himself, but far more than Himself. To what a terrible distance man, by sin, had put himself from God. But the riches of God's grace are equal to the need. That blessed neighbour stoops down from the height of His equality with God to put Himself alongside of the poor sinner. Not merely to taste of suffering and sorrow as a man on earth, but

He takes upon Himself the whole burden of our sin, and all its terrible consequences; He comes right down to where we are. It was commanded of old, "Thou shalt not go up *by steps* unto Mine altar" (Ex. xx. 26). The altar told of God's way of meeting the sinner, by the atoning blood of the Substitute; and God's provision comes down to the utmost depth of the sinner's need. To make steps up to the altar, is to say that God is still a long way off, and that we must lift ourselves up to get near Him. Such steps we see men making on all sides. Steps of religious ordinances, of moral and social reformations; stepping-stones to the Gospel, they are sometimes called. Alas, the makers of them little know the dishonour they are thus putting on the Gospel. Jesus is the true neighbour, the One in whom God has revealed His wonderful neighbour character. Whatever our circumstances, whether as lost sinners, or as tried, suffering—yes, and failing or even backsliding—children of God, God is still a God "at hand," and those who call upon Him find Him so.

“FULLY PERSUADED.”

“ course, it is not to be expected that we can all see alike; so we must just do what we think to be right, and not judge one another.” We have probably most of us received such an answer as this from time to time; and it will not be time lost to consider carefully how far such words agree with the revealed mind of God. There is doubtless a measure of truth in them; for are we not asked in Rom. xiv. 4, “Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant?” and again, in verse 10, “But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.” But first of all, we need to be sure that we are applying such scriptures in their right place. In Rom. xiv., we are bidden to receive those who are weak in the faith, “but not to doubtful disputations” (see verse 1). And then the apostle goes on to remind the saints to whom he is writing, that

there were matters about which God had not yet spoken in such a way as to leave no possibility for doubt in the mind of those who truly sought to know His will. Of such a class were questions about meats and drinks, and the observance of special days; things that the law had given definite instructions about, while it did not appear equally clear that God had set those instructions aside by the Gospel. About such matters, then, believers were required to exercise forbearance towards one another, and to abstain from judging each other. It is quite true that those particular questions have long ceased to be matters of doubt to those who simply walk by the Word of God. The ceremonial observance of the Jewish feast days, and of the distinctions between clean and unclean meats, has been done away with by the full revelation of God’s purpose that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, with believers from among the Jews. God has effectually broken down

the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, having abolished, in the body of the Lord Jesus, the enmity, even the law of commandments, contained in ordinances" (see Eph. ii. 14, 15). We can scarcely class with the doubtful questions of Romans xiv. the man-made ordinances, and the observance of man-appointed times and seasons, that are so common in these days. These things surely belong to the "traditions of men," which make void the Word of God, and were consequently so solemnly condemned by the Lord Jesus Himself. There are, however, without doubt, other things in the present day, which will compare more nearly with the doubtful thoughts, about which Paul wrote to the Roman saints — things about which no precise instructions are given in the New Testament, and in regard to which the application of the principles given for our guidance may not be equally clear to all honest seekers after the mind of God. In all such cases, let us take care that we do not by

harsh judgments set at nought our brother, or interfere with his living "unto the Lord" in all that he does. On the other hand, let those who claim liberty thus to act before God, take care that they are not using the Scripture which forbids their brother to judge them, as a justification for their own indifference as to what really is the mind of God. For assuredly God has a mind about all these things, and the forbearance that He bids us exercise towards each other is intended to lead up to oneness of mind amongst His people, even about the very things that, meanwhile, they are not to judge or despise each other about. The whole subject that is dealt with in Romans xiv., concludes at verse 7 of the next chapter; and while the means to be used are patient forbearance and seeking the good of others, according to Christ Jesus, the end to be aimed at is, "that ye may, with *one mind* and *one mouth*, glorify God." We must not be content then to settle down to continued difference of judgment, and

of speech, even about such matters, only, we must always remember the means God has appointed for bringing about the one mind and one mouth. And we shall do well to notice one much-neglected word in chap. xiv. 5, "Let every man be *fully persuaded* in his own mind." We have often heard brethren say, "You take your way, and let me have mine;" but we greatly fear that this savours very little of care to please God, or to edify our neighbour. Twice over in the apostle's dealing with this subject, we get the words, "let every man," or, more correctly, "let *each* man," for he is pressing the two-fold individual responsibility of each one of us. The first is in the passage quoted above: "Let each man be fully persuaded in his own mind." The second is in Ch. xv. 2: "Let *each* one of us please his neighbour, for good, unto edifying." God holds me responsible then, first of all, to be fully persuaded in my own mind, that what I do is pleasing to Him; and next, to see that in my doing of it, I am caring

for my brother's good. And what does He mean by being "fully persuaded"? Certainly not that I have overcome all scruples of conscience by mere reasonings; while I am not willing to consider, on the one hand, scriptures that brethren desire to set before me, or, on the other, the possible hurtful effects of what I do upon weaker brethren. There is the full persuasion of dogged obstinacy, and there is also the full persuasion that Paul could appeal to in Timothy, when he wrote, "Continue thou in the things that thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them, and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures" (2 Tim. iii. 14, 15). God grant us all more of an exercised conscience, that our full persuasion may be from Himself, and that we ever be ready to hear His Word or the claims of weaker fellow saints. And being thus fully persuaded, may we have grace to seek our brother's good, to edification; for only by attention to both these things, shall we be helping on towards the one mind and one mouth that are so pleasing to God.

GLORYING IN THE CROSS.

WHEN the Apostle Paul tells us in Gal. vi. 14, why he glories in the cross of Christ, his reason is a two-fold one. Probably most of us would have expected him to say that it was because on that cross Christ had died for him. But this, blessedly true as it was, the Apostle does not even mention in that connection. His words are as follows: "But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom (more correctly, by which) the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Full well did Paul know and value the other great foundation truth that on that cross Christ died for him. But it is quite a distinct view of the cross and its blessed results that is here before his mind; and we cannot get a better illustration of his meaning than the one presented to us in the deliverance of the Children of Israel out of Egypt through the divided waters of the

Red Sea. The blood of the passover lamb, sprinkled over their doors, sets before us the first great truth of the Cross. There we see the sinner perfectly sheltered from the wrath of God by the atoning blood of the substitute. The first-born, inside the house, could say, "The lamb has died instead of me, and I am safe." But this had only to do with salvation from the judgment of God; and, if God had done nothing more for the Israelites, they would still have remained in bondage under the King of Egypt and his cruel taskmasters. God never does anything by halves, however; and the divided waters, through which God triumphantly led His people, completed what the sprinkled blood had begun. What must have been the thoughts of that multitude as they looked down upon the Sea, through whose depths they had just passed? While they were still on the Egypt side of the Sea, they might have said, "We are shut in between Pharaoh's army and the water. Our only escape from the Egyptians

will be to perish in the Sea." But now, what a marvellous change had taken place. It was still true that no way of escape from Pharoah could be found except by the Sea; but they had been down to the bottom of the Sea, and had come up again on the further side, and thus Pharoah had no longer any power over them. Can we not imagine that same first-born son, who had previously learned the sheltering power of the sprinkled blood, now saying, "Egypt is dead to me now, and I am dead to Egypt. Pharoah's taskmasters can never call me to make bricks again, for I am completely beyond their reach. Down in that Sea I died to Egypt, and now that its waters have closed together again, Egypt is dead to me"? And can we not see how exactly this agrees with Gal. vi. 14? The triumphant song of Exodus xv., and Paul's glorying in this verse, spring from the same source. But in Paul's case he did not look to one object as having saved him from the wrath of God, and to another as

delivering him from the dominion of sin. The same blessed Son of God accomplished the whole salvation, and He wrought it all on Calvary's Cross. But one word more. If the Sea effectually cut Israel off from the land of bondage, it also cut them off from the land of their daily food. It was true that in Egypt they had been cruelly oppressed, but, on the other hand, they had been fed from Egypt's barns and flesh-pots. It was very delightful to know that the bondage was ended, and they all sang their redemption song with hearts full of joy. But when, some days after, bread ran short, they were made to realize that, if Egypt's power could not cross the Sea to drive them back to their former tasks, neither could they re-cross that Sea for food to satisfy their hunger. So many important lessons suggest themselves in connection with this view of the subject, that, if the Lord will, we shall hope to return to it next month.

THE GIFT OF GOD.

(ROM. vi. 23.)

“THE wages of sin is *death*,
 'Tis God who speaks the word,
 “But the gift of God is *eternal life*,
 Through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The quenchless flame, this death,
 For the devil and his prepared ;
 “But the gift of God is eternal life,
 Through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

No more than *wages* due,
 A just God hath declared ;
 “But the gift of God is eternal life,
 Through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

And *every* soul hath sinned,
 Come short of the glory of God ;
 Yet “the gift of God is eternal life,
 Through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

How wilt thou bear thy doom ?
 How canst thou face thy God ?
 Unfit to stand in His holy sight,
 How take thy sin's award ?

Why wilt thou, sinner, die ?
 Thou hast His message heard ;
 That *thou* may'st have “eternal life,
 Through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

For *He* our wages took,
 The holy Son of God ;
 That God might give “eternal life,
 Through *Jesus Christ* our Lord,”

He *offers* it full and free,
 Oh ! take Him at His word ;
 And *receive* GOD'S GIFT of “eternal life,
 Through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

“THE JUST SHALL LIVE
BY FAITH.”

Hab. ii. 4.

IN the days before the Flood,
 that old-world dispensation
 which began in Eden and
 ended with the Deluge, three men
 stand out clear and distinct from
 the multitudes around — Abel,
 Enoch, and Noah, three men of
 faith in God. It was this faith
 that distinguished them from the
 world of unbelievers around. In
 the fourth and fifth of Genesis,
 those throngs of human souls
 are seen dimly indistinct. From
 among the children of Cain wafts
 a far off roar of busy life, sounds
 of music mingle with the forging
 of weapons ; and an undertone of
 grief and pain is there too, enter-
 ing into their very names, as in the
 name “Mehujael,” or “one
 smitten of God.” A race smitten
 of God, yet seeking to deaden
 the sense of pain in business and
 pleasure. “Let us eat and drink,”
 they seem to say, “for to-morrow
 we die.” And, on the other hand,

the children of Enos, the son of Seth (by his name "Enos" confessed to be "incurably evil") flit past, a silent stream of souls; and as each vanishes into the grave, it is written, "and he died." In these three classes, we are not only shewn that by-gone world of souls, but here, as in a mirror, we can also see a faithful picture of this present world. For, "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." "There is no difference," save where grace comes in and is grasped by the hand of faith. In the Cain family we get a view of "this present evil world" (Gal. i. 4.) revolted from God, and setting themselves to improve and beautify and civilize the things around. A sort of millennium *without* God; man, corrupt man, being the lord; and "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life" his ruling principles; a living in "the things that are seen," "the unseen" being thrust out of sight and forgotten. Philanthropy and science and

civilization are quite at home in such a scene, but God, and "the things that be of God," as well as the faith that has eyes to see and ears to hear, are all unknown. And, yet, they were hurrying on to their doom, all the same. We do not get rid of facts by shutting our eyes to them; and this present evil world is rushing on now in like manner as it was then. Are we remembering that the world around us "lieth in wickedness," and that "it passeth away, and the lust thereof"? That a day is coming when God will "judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained"? (Acts xvii. 31.) What are we doing, we who are saved ourselves, plucked as brands from the burning, amid these Cainites, our neighbours, perhaps even our friends, or our own relatives? *They* are singing, feasting, working, fighting; they are inventing and improving, and dream of a millennium, saying "peace, peace," and sudden destruction all the while is impending over them. We know it, *they* do

not. What are we doing? "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, 'Behold we knew it not;' doth not He that pondereth the heart consider it? And He that keepeth thy soul, doth He not know it? And shall not He render to every man according to his works?" (Prov. xxiv. 11, 12.) In this other picture, we get another view of man as he is seen in the searching light of God. "Every man . . . is vanity," says the Psalmist in Ps. xxxix. 5. That word "vanity" is "*Abel*," or "Hebel," the name Eve gave to her second son, the first human being that died. Man's short-lived, shadowy journey from the cradle to the grave, and death the solemn, dark background to this short life, come out in this word "vanity." Death at the end robs life of its value, its reality, and its joy, when life *here* is all that is known or possessed. The book of Ecclesiastes is the book of vanity. "It is appointed unto men once to

die, and after this the judgment" (Heb. ix. 27.) And where this is *all* of the truth that is before man, the solemn goal robs him of his appetite for life; so that where man is too senseless even to fear, none the less this present life loses all real value. It is a shadow, a dream, a dream with an awful awakening. (Isa. xxix. 8.; Ps. lxxiii. 18, 20). But God tells us of three exceptions, saved from among the rest. Abel, Enoch, Noah, are lights in the darkness; living proofs that it is worth while to trust God, that "Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." Abel murdered, is better off than Cain living with a world-wide dwelling. Enoch, walking with God in every-day life, is happier than the others enjoying "the pleasures of sin for a season." And Noah, hidden in the ark from the judgment of water that swept a world away, is a blessed man from among that crowd of lost souls. Let us look at these three men, and see what there was common to them all, that singled them out as

different from all others. For their lives were unlike those around, separated from them, contrary to them. They did not drift with the current, or fall in with the ways of the world. Their course was contrary to the rules of common sense. An unseen force possessed them, shaped their characters, and urged them on in an opposite direction to the rest. It must have been strange to their neighbours, but God tells us what was the secret of their lives. "The just shall live by faith" (Hab. ii. 4.) In Heb. xi. we read (verse 4), "*By faith* Abel offered . . . obtained witness that he was righteous, . . . and being dead, yet speaketh." In verse 5, "*by faith* Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him: for *before* his translation, he had this testimony that *he pleased God.*" And again, in verse 7, "*By faith* Noah . . . *moved with fear*, prepared an ark, . . . condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is

by faith." They all had this one thing in common — faith. And their faith was faith *in God*. That is what made them different from others. Think of it! Out of a world, only three men who *believed God!* What condemnation of the world is involved in that fact, "By faith Noah condemned the world." The two-fold message of coming judgment and coming deliverance was not kept to himself. Noah was "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2, 5), and for a hundred and twenty years he bore witness by word and by deed that he, at least, believed God. In the same way each of these three men believed *in God*, that is, they did not "forget God." "He that cometh to God must believe that *HE IS*" (Heb. xi. 6). They also believed what *He said*. We are told that it was *by faith* that Abel came to God through the blood of an innocent substitute. We are sure, therefore, that he acted on no self-invented device, but on a revelation from God, and one that agrees with all that is

found in God's written word from Genesis to Revelation; "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22). "The blood . . . cleanseth from all sin" (1 John i. 7). "He being dead, yet speaketh," and his message is, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29).

And Enoch believed in God (Heb. xi. 6), and, therefore, he also believed God's word, for "Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment upon all, &c.," (Jude 14.) "Enoch walked with God." That implies agreement and friendship, for how "can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos iii. 3.) And friends get to understand one another, and to hear each other's secrets. "The Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants, the prophets" (Am. iii. 7). So Enoch's message is about the Lord's coming, and what He is going to do when He comes.

We shall never learn God's secrets, unless we keep company with Him; and we cannot take a real message from Him, if we are not near enough to hear His "still small voice." Noah, too, believed God's word, for he not only proclaimed it as a preacher of righteousness, but "being warned of God," he was "moved with fear," and built the ark in which God had promised to save him and his. These three men not only believed in God, and believed what He said, but they *trusted Him*. We may both be sure of a person's existence, and have good reason to judge what he says to be true, and yet be far from *trusting* in him for any thing. "The devils also believe *and tremble!*" God says to the sinner, "Come unto *Me*," and shews Him a way to come "by the blood of Jesus." Abel not only believed God's word about the way, but he *came* at God's invitation, in the way revealed. While from Cain downward, sinners have turned their back on God and tried every way to hide themselves

from Him, this one man, a sinner too, turns round at the call, and comes back, trustfully committing himself to God, on the assurance that God would save him by a substitute. And Enoch trusted Him. How else could he have pleased Him? (Heb. xi. 6.)—how else been happy in His company? The very form of Enoch's prophecy in Jude, shews the trustful intelligence of a friend. He says the judgment will be both for the ungodliness of those judged and for "all their *hard* speeches." He knew his Lord, and knew how false "hard speeches" of Him were. The *professing* servant in Matt. xxv. 24, says, "*I knew Thee, that Thou art an hard man!*" Not so Enoch. He and the ten thousands who shall then come with the Lord will be living witnesses to the contrary. We do well to ask ourselves if we have Enoch's confidence in God. If not, it is because we are strangers to Enoch's life-fellowship with God. John, the disciple "whom Jesus loved," bears witness that "Perfect love (*His* perfect

love) casteth out fear" (1 John, iv. 18). And Noah proved his full reliance on God, when, in the face of an unbelieving world, he kept on building his ark all those years, and was not afraid to trust himself and all he had most precious, inside its shelter from the coming wrath. "The just shall live by faith." Abel lives; Enoch lives; Noah lives. And we may live the same life of faith in the Son of God now, in this present evil world, that they did in that by-gone age. God has revealed Himself (1 John, v. 20) more fully now. "The Son of God has come." "He has declared Him" (John i. 18). The word is more full and explicit. The way is more manifest.

. . . The sacrifice is o'er;
No flame, no smoke ascends on high,
The lamb is slain no more.
But richer blood *has* flowed from nobler
veins,
To purge the soul from guilt and cleanse
the sinner's stains.

"God hath spoken to us in these last days by *His Son*." But do not let us mistake head knowledge for faith. Alas, how the simple,

living confidence of such men as Abel, Enoch, and Noah, puts our unbelief to shame. We know a great deal that they had never heard of, but they knew God and trusted Him, and so they pleased Him, and what can we put before our souls higher than that?

“WALK BEFORE ME, AND BE THOU PERFECT.”

THERE is a great danger in mistaking the busy activity around us, so common in the present day, for true service to God. Whenever we are living as before men, instead of before God, there will be restlessness and disquiet of spirit. There may be a desire to do many things commanded in the Word, but they are not done in peaceful joy “unto the Lord.” The moment a servant acts independently, he acts out of character. The great feature in Christ’s character was, His dependence on the Father—“I can of mine own self do nothing.” We are only free from all deceit when living before God.

COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE EDITOR

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GLORIFYING IN THE CROSS.

II.

EGYPT was the country of visible abundance. The mighty river Nile, that flowed through the whole length of the land, every year overflowed its banks, and spread itself over a vast tract of country, fertilising and watering the soil, so that it brought forth abundantly. In this way, Egypt was not dependent upon the rain from heaven; and when there was drought in other lands, and consequently famine, Egypt had its unfailing harvests, so that the "corn in Egypt" was the envy of the inhabitants of less favoured countries.

There was little call for the exercise of faith in such a land. The eye naturally looked at the abundant supplies laid up in

the store-houses, and men forgot Him who opens His hand to satisfy the desire of every living thing. In this land, the children of Israel had dwelt, and there, while they groaned under the burdens laid upon them, they fed at least upon Egypt's provisions. But the burdens grew heavier and heavier, and in the anguish of their souls, they longed for deliverance. Only let them get away from their cruel task-masters; everything else was forgotten in the one agonising cry. And now God had heard their cry; Pharaoh and his host were drowned in the sea; while the liberated Israelites were not only *out of* Egypt, but completely *cut off from it*, by those same waters. And where did they find themselves? Oh! what a contrast to the land they had come out of. They were in a wilderness, a barren

land that yielded no supplies. But this barren land was to teach them precious lessons for the soul, that could never have been learned in Egypt. In that land of plenty, they had been wont to look round upon the seen things, for these were the source of all their supplies; but in the wilderness, they were to learn to look up to God for everything they needed. But these lessons are not easily learned, and again and again did their thoughts wander back to the land where they had never known hunger and thirst, whatever other distresses had fallen upon them. But they could not re-cross the sea. Those separating waters had cut them off from Egypt, and had shut them up to God; and God was teaching them that He was sufficient for them. What a lesson to our own unbelieving hearts; to notice the contrast between God's appeals to their former days in Egypt, and the way in which their own hearts continually went back to them. God always reminded them that Egypt was the land of *bon-*

dage, and that He had *brought them out* of it. They, on the other hand, whenever trials came, thought of Egypt as the land of plenty, and wished themselves there again.

Let us look at a few instances on each side. When God gave them the law from Mount Sinai, He prefaced it by saying, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex. xx. 2). When He commanded them to wear the ribband of blue, as a token that they must keep *all* His commandments, He added similar words (see Num. xv. 37-41). Again, He warns them, when they should have come into the good land and be partaking of its abundance, "Then beware, lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage" (Deut. vi. 12). And, in the same chapter, He instructs them, that in days to come, when their children should ask them as to the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments that the Lord had given

them, they should answer: "We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand," &c. (verse 21). And ever after, God makes this deliverance that He had wrought for them, the very ground on which He expects their confidence; as in Psa. lxxxii. 10, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Now let us look at the other side. In their earlier murmurings, the children of Israel spoke reproachfully of their present lack, and compared it with their former plenty in Egypt; but they scarcely expressed a wish to be back again. As when they were hungry, and said, "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full" (Ex. xvi. 3). Or when they thirsted, and murmured against Moses, saying, "Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our

cattle with thirst?" (Ex. xvii. 3). But as time went on, they appear to have grown more completely forgetful of their former bondage, and of the mercy which had saved them out of it; so that, when there was no lack of food, they openly murmured, because they longed for the delicacies of Egypt in preference to the manna. "Who shall give us flesh to eat?" they asked. "We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick; but now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes" (Num. xi. 4-6). Have we ever known such an experience? Probably we have never expressed it openly, as those Israelites did. But has it been there, in our hearts, even if we did not utter the words? Has the precious word of God ceased to be an all-satisfying portion to our souls? Do we remember former delights, and begin to hanker after them again? Then surely we need the renewal

of the experience of that happy day when first we sang the song of redemption. Oh! the triumph with which those deep waters filled the joyful souls of the Israelites that day, when they had newly come up out of their depths. Their enemies were overthrown in the sea, while they themselves were clean cut off from Egypt by its waters. And we have had such a view of Calvary's cross; and did it not bring like triumph into our souls? By it, Jesus obtained the victory for me, delivering me from Satan's bondage. By it, I saw myself clean separated from the world. The world could no longer claim me for itself; and I, on the other hand, had no longer any claim on the world. The world was crucified to me, and I to the world. Yes, indeed I gloried in the cross. But has all that grown dim to me, till I have begun, like the Israelites, rather to think of what I have lost, than of what I have been delivered out of? Then there is only the one remedy. As God ever carried the minds of the

children of Israel back to the bondage, the furnace of iron, and to the manner of their deliverance out of it; so He takes us back to Calvary to learn afresh its mighty lessons. We do well to sing—

“Oh Lamb of God, still keep me
Near to Thy wounded side.”

God help us to make it our continual prayer.

(To be continued.)

FAITH, AND ETERNAL SALVATION.

(READ LUKE viii. 12.)

WHEREVER the Gospel of the grace of God is faithfully preached, there are two great, though invisible, persons present. The one is heavenly and holy, while the other is hellish and sinful. The objects they have in view differ exceedingly, for one seeks to lead men to Christ and salvation, and the other designs to allure men to darkness and damnation. The influence of

either is directly affected by the attitude assumed by the hearer, for the Holy Spirit may be yielded to or resisted, while the devil may be defeated or otherwise by the sinner's course. We do not think the devil attends a meeting (as an opposer) which merely has for its object the improvement or reformation of the sinner. But let the plain and unadulterated message of God be declared, and there he ever is to thwart and hinder by every conceivable means. For, notwithstanding the many devices by which he seeks to prove that salvation does not hinge upon simple faith, full well does he know the truth of the thing he denies. Why, he is as fully assured that justification is by faith as was Martin Luther! If this were not the case, his course with an awakened soul would be unintelligible; for what is it that explains his intense anxiety to catch away the word out of the sinner's heart? In this parable, the Son of God has thrust aside the mask, and unveiled the devil's purpose. Hear

the word of the One who perfectly understood his motive: "Then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their heart, lest they should believe, and be saved." There is the clear and emphatic explanation! He must do his satanic work 'ere the heart accepts the gospel, or he is foiled for ever. See that young man in the Gospel meeting! His whole being is stirred; God the Holy Spirit is striving with him, and he is on the threshold of eternal salvation, when lo! satan begins to work in earnest. How is it that he will not permit him, if he can hinder it, to trust in Jesus? If the "falling away" theory were correct, what need would there be for the devil's activity just then? Could he not reason thus: "Well, let him believe to-night; I can undo the work a week or a month hence." Ah! he knows better. The word "saved," divinely attached to the act of faith, is rightly interpreted by him; he must snatch the word away *then or never*. Why we can disprove the fallacies of those who

deny that eternal salvation is the sure result of faith, by the course the devil pursues towards an awakened one. All sin and misery in existence now can be directly traced to *unbelief* in the Word of God. Eve mistrusted her God, believed the lie of satan, and thus were opened the flood-gates of sin and hell. But, thank God, Christ has died for the ungodly, and present joy and forgiveness, with eternal glory in prospect, are the sure results of simple faith in His word. Thus, in the infinite wisdom of God, is the unbelief of Eden in its effects upon man everlastingly cancelled; while those who honour God by simple faith in His word are introduced into a much higher position than that forfeited by the unbelief of our first parents. Brethren (and especially those actively engaged in Gospel work), let us remember the devices of the foe, expose his snares with the truth of God, and thus seek to deliver the unsaved from the power of satan, and to turn them to God (Acts xxvi. 18).

“THAT BLESSED HOPE.”

CHANGED in a moment, caught
away,
Oh that will be a glorious day,
When rising in His image fair,
We meet our Saviour in the air.
This blessed hope oft cheers the heart,
When wounded sore with sorrow's smart;
It tints our clouds with rainbow light,
And gives sweet songs in deepest night.

Sweet hope! Thy brighter lustre throws
Into dim shade earth's gaudy shows;
It purifies the longing heart,
And bids the tempter hence depart.
Shall night's deep slumber close our eyes,
When shines before us such a prize?
No—clasping on this helmet true,
We'll keep the Morning Star in view.

Sure hope! In Thee we lowly laid
Some lov'd ones 'neath the willow shade,
To rest a-while; but not for long;
They'll rise with us, one gathered throng.
In one blest moment, rapt away
To the bright land of cloudless day,
For ever with the Lord to be,
His throne to share, His glory see.

—:o:—

“O happy day! when we shall see,
And fix our longing eyes on Thee;
On Thee, our Light, our Life, our Love,
Our ALL below, our Heaven above.”

THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH.

LET us take another look at Abel, Enoch, and Noah; and consider how their lives illustrate "the obedience of faith," as it is called in Rom. i. 5., and xvi. 26. For faith is a very practical thing, as we may easily see in the affairs of everyday life around us. Faith in our fellow men influences our actions towards them. Just so, faith in God leads us to take Him at His word, and to do as He bids us. "Take this medicine," says the doctor to his patient, and the sick man takes it, for he trusts his doctor. "Come," said the Lord Jesus to Peter, and Peter stepped out of the vessel into the yielding, heaving water. That was "the obedience of faith." Peter knew that his Lord (and ours), would not deceive him, could not lure him by a treacherous word of hope. So he stepped out upon that one word "Come," and it bore him up. It could not fail; it never failed anyone yet. Thus

Abel came to God, and thus he offered a *fuller* sacrifice (so the word is literally in Heb. xi. 4.), than Cain. Fuller, because the blood of the lamb, type of the precious blood of Jesus Christ, was there. Unbelief may do a great deal, may even do much that the word of God commands; but God never accounts what it does as obedience. Unbelief seeks to gain acceptance with God by what it does, and thereby gives the lie to God's testimony about His Son. Faith accepts the testimony of God, and draws near to Him. Then the offering that faith brings is well-pleasing to God, because the offerer was first of all accepted, made nigh, through the precious blood of Christ. We who have yielded ourselves to Him for cleansing and life, often wonder sorrowfully over the many around us who cannot be prevailed on to take God at His word, and thus to come to Him. But is it not far stranger and more grievous, that there is so little trust in God, so little of "the obedience of faith"

among *ourselves*; that we know so little of the Enoch-walk with God, and the Enoch-pleasing of God; we, who look to be translated like Enoch, and to walk with him in blessed fellowship above? That walk above, will it not be greatly sweeter and more blessed because of the memories and experiences of the walk with Him through the desert here? Are we not convicted of selfishness in this, that we think far more of what we have *in* Christ, than of what we can be *to* Christ and *for* Christ? "Learn of Me," comes after "Come unto Me." We came because we needed salvation. Are we learning of Him who was meek and lowly in heart, and who said—"My meat is *to do the will* of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work"? "I came not to do Mine own will." "I do *always* those things that please Him." Let us take special note of that word, for in it lies the secret of walking with God. "He that sent Me *is with Me*, the Father hath not left Me alone,

for I do *always those things that please Him.*" (John viii. 29). "Even Christ pleased *not* Himself." (Rom. xv. 3). And if this was so of HIM, how far more necessary in *our* case. God's will *and* my will cannot walk together; for His will is good, while mine would ever and always lead me only wrong. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" Then one of the two must yield. Shall I yield myself to God? If not, we cannot walk together. Is anything in the world to be compared with "the secret of His presence"? And how am I to know the path of His fellowship? Many are seeking after holiness, communion with God, and power for testimony and service; but there is *only* one way, the same that *Jesus trod*. The disciple is not above his Master. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto *according to Thy word.*" (Ps. cxix. 9). "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (Ps. cxix. 105).

It is "a lamp unto *my feet*," for, brought to bear upon all my ways, it shews me where my feet are walking, whether in the track of His footprints or out of the way. And it is "a light unto my path," for, be the darkness around ever so dense, the confusion, the difficulties, ever so great, there is a path always possible for "the obedience of faith;" and following Jesus we can say, "*The Lord* is my shepherd, I shall not want."

If Enoch had *wanted* anything that God's presence and all-sufficiency had failed to supply, he must have left God and gone elsewhere in quest of what he needed; as the younger son, in Luke xv., left home to gratify his wish for the pleasures of sin. "A double-minded man" (lit., "a double-souled man"), says James, "is unstable in all his ways." Our own will draws us aside in self-pleasing; but we are ill at ease in "the far country." Then we miss and lament for His presence; but even as we long and sigh, "Oh, for a closer walk with God,"

we meet some fresh incitement to self-pleasing, and start away again from our faithful Lord and the pathway of His word. Let us be more Enoch-minded, and more Noah-minded. "*I will manifest myself to Him*," is the promise made to the disciple who shall "*keep*" *His word*. Were that "exceeding great reward" (Gen. xv. 1.), understood and prized aright, it would cause everything, for the sake of which we are often tempted to leave His side, to become worthless in our eyes. "I could not see for the glory of that light," said Paul. Oh, that our eyes were filled with the glory of Jesus, then we should see no glory in the vainglory of this world. And there is another secret of blessing to be learnt from Enoch and from Noah. *Power* for testimony will result from walking with God. "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secrets unto His servants the prophets. The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord God hath spoken, who

can but prophesy?" (Am. iii. 7, 8). Many are too ready to speak, like the false prophets of whom God says, "I am against the prophets . . . that *steal my words*, every one from his neighbour, . . . that use their tongues, and say, "He saith." (Jer. xxiii. 30, 31). Enoch and Noah got their message straight from the Lord *Himself*; and that is the only way owned by God. "He that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully." (Jer. xxiii. 28). Power to serve God is also the fruit of walking with God. We must be "filled with *the knowledge of His will*" if we would "walk worthy of the Lord unto *all* pleasing." (Col. i. 9, 10). Four times it is written of Noah that, "according to all that the Lord commanded him, *so did he*." In the Old Testament language, *to hear* means also *to obey*; and one of the New Testament words translated "to believe," also means *to obey*." It was enough for Abel, Enoch, and Noah to *hear* God's words; for, to *hear* was *to be-*

lieve, and to believe was *to obey*. "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire," He will take "vengeance on them that *know not* God and *obey not* the Gospel." (2 Thes. i. 8). If God holds those that are strangers and far off responsible for the *disobedience* of their *unbelief*, will He count it a light thing for His redeemed children to fail in "the obedience of faith?" We need faithful self-judgment in this matter, for it is the one manifest test of faith's reality.

Christendom, with its creeds, and public ceremonies, and lip-service, says, "I believe," but where is the obedience of faith? It is in "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor. x. 5). To test *everything* we think, say, and do, by the Word of God, is the only safeguard against self-deception on this point. And the *power* is, "the love of Christ constraineth me." "If ye love Me, ye *will keep* My commandments." (John xiv. 15, R.V.)

"BE STRONG IN THE LORD."

[NOTES OF AN ADDRESS].

BE strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." (Eph. vi. 10). "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. ii. 1). "Without Me ye can do nothing." (John xv. 5). Put alongside that, another verse. "I can do *all* things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv. 13). And another,— "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness," &c. (2 Cor. xii. 9).

We see from these scriptures that the Lord alone is the source of all strength. There is nothing that is more important for our souls to apprehend than this; that it has pleased God, in His infinite love and wisdom, to put us in the place of dependence upon Himself and His own dear Son. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power." (Col. ii. 9, 10). "And of His fulness have all we received, and grace upon grace." (John i. 16). What is the power that keeps everything in its

place in nature? Men say, "It is the law of gravitation." That is a scientific term, which, to many, only hides the truth, that all things hang upon God; and that "He upholdeth all things by the word of His power." Men speak as if God had created the world and then withdrawn from it, leaving it to go on as a machine; but that is not the case. By the word of God, the earth (at this present moment) is standing out of the water and in the water; and by that same word, it is "kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men." (2 Peter iii. 5, 7).

All things hang upon God; and we are dependent upon Him for every breath we breathe; for "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts xvii. 28). As in the natural world, even so in the spiritual; it has pleased God not to give us any separate power apart from Himself. God would make us, as His children, dependent on Himself alone for all things. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son . . . hath declared Him" (or told Him out—John i. 18). The Man, Christ Jesus, the One who died and

rose again, and is now at the right hand of God, is the treasure-house in which is stored all God's grace for His people. He is "the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body." (Eph. i. 22, 23).

This is a blessed lesson for us to learn; and God would have us carry it into every department of our life. Apart from Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, we can do nothing. The only hindrance to our not knowing His strength is our own strength. Our weakness is no hindrance, but our strength is. We read in Ps. cvii., that when men "are at their wits' end, then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses" (verses 27, 28). He says also in another scripture (Hosea v. 15), "I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offence and seek My face." He allows His people to be brought into circumstances of trial and sorrow, in order that they may be led to realise their need of Him, and seek His face, owning their dependence upon Himself alone.

The Lord Jesus, when on earth, was a mystery to many. Crowds rubbed shoulders with Him, and got nothing from Him; but we

never read of anyone coming to Him in felt conscious need, and asking from Him in faith, that did not get helped. Never one. He was a mystery to the proud, unbelieving, self-righteous Pharisee; but to the one who brought his need in child-like simplicity and faith, He was opened out in all the fulness of His Godhead, power, and wisdom. That same blessed, gracious One is at the right hand of God; and all power in heaven and earth is committed unto Him, to be wielded on behalf of His needy people.

Jacob, as long as he was strong, wrestled with the angel, and would not give in, until, in love, the angel touched the hollow of his thigh—the *sinew of his strength*. Then he yielded, and it was his yielding that enabled God to bestow the blessing which He was obliged to withhold all the time that Jacob had strength to wrestle. With the apostle Paul too, his greatness lay just in his conscious feebleness. In order that he might be kept low, the Lord permitted satan to give him some trying thorn in his flesh. What this was we do not know; but this we do know, that it was something that kept him in the place of conscious weakness, so that he could

rely upon nothing but the grace of the Lord Jesus. And now he says, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." The apostle, who had known so much of the grace of God, could exhort Timothy to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." For whether our conflict is against the power of inward sin, or against the temptations of satan or the world, God would teach us by all these things to trust Him; to count upon His un-failing grace.

Turn now to Heb. xi. 33. Observe what God brings together here,—“Through faith, subdued kingdoms.” That is a great thing. If we had a kingdom to subdue, we should not attempt to do it ourselves, because we should at once see it to be impossible; and we should therefore count upon God to do it for us. But we have to go to-morrow morning to our daily employment, and in it all to work righteousness. Now, we need the same faith in God to work righteousness as we do to subdue a kingdom. Grace and faith are two things that God brings together. Grace is to become mine by faith. “All things are of God.” Faith is the empty pitcher

that comes to the fountain to be filled; faith is the ignorant one going to the teacher to be taught; the weak one going to the strong One to get strength; the needy one looking to God to supply his need. Just as when I received salvation through faith in Christ at the first, I came in my guiltiness and vileness, and looked to Him to pardon and cleanse me, and the moment I believed in Jesus, immediately I was made whole. In the same way may I obtain power to work righteousness. All our strength is in Christ; and looking to Him alone, we receive strength for all the service that He gives us to do. Have we faith that God will supply all our need? Then let us come in faith, and that need will be supplied. We know that God bestows grace, and faith obtains it. But, in addition to this, there are certain means appointed by God by which the grace is given. The Lord says that “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord shall man live.” The Lord God has spoken, and faith will sit down at the feet of Jesus to learn His mind. If we always listened in faith to His word, then our need would ever make its appeal to Him.

The Word of God is the channel of His communication to the soul; and prayer is the appeal of the soul to Him. God would have us day by day to hang in conscious dependence upon Himself. If we would have His blessing, the way to obtain it is to lean upon the Mighty One in conscious weakness and simple faith; and walking in the path of obedience, we shall learn to trust Him.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

WE are called to be hasting unto the coming of the Lord. It is the haste of affection, not the hurry of impatience. Hence, there is patient waiting during the little while, and here is occupation. Haste to a brother's need. Haste to help him when he stumbles. Do work below for loved ones, while Christ is doing work above. Spread through the assembly and among fellow-saints, during the little while, this new commandment, "Love one another." We are to see Christ in every fellow-saint. We love an absent Lord, but we can bestow works of love on Him; hence His instructions, "Love the members of My body on earth, show practical love to them."

LEISURE HOURS.

[EXTRACT FROM A LETTER.]

I TRUST your voyage has given you a season of sweet fellowship with the Lord, and has been enriched with much precious meditation out of His word. Not that I suppose that a time of cessation from ordinary labour is necessarily a time of closer communion, or that busily occupied days prevent our having the truest fellowship with the Lord. The soul needs to be in a healthy state in order to employ profitably the leisure hours that are sometimes granted us. Indeed, I am inclined to think, that nothing so tests the state of soul as some days of enforced idleness as to our ordinary occupations. Does the Lord's presence fill up the gap, or do we find ourselves turning to some vanities that we thought we had done with for ever, because our hours are no longer filled up with the incessant routine of business and meetings? It is well to be

tested about such things; and how good it is to know, that when the Lord's testings find out our weak points, it is that we may turn to Him as the healer and the strength-giver. Man tests, and exults in the failure his test brings to light; that is, if he is testing the work of another, but not if he is trying his own work. When a boiler-maker tests a boiler before sending it out, if he finds leaky places, he at once causes them to be re-riveted, so that all may be perfect. It is his own workmanship, and he knows that his own credit is bound up with it. Thank God we are His workmanship, and He tests us, not that he may exult over our failures, but that He may perfect what is wanting. What reason we have then for putting ourselves unreservedly into His hands, and meekly submitting ourselves to all His gracious will.

—:0:—

“THE ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.” “That is what no manufacturer can produce, nor price procure, but which grace effects to the glory of God.”

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GLORYING IN THE CROSS.

III.

 **BEDIENCE** and faith can never be separated. If we cannot trust God, we certainly cannot obey Him. Let us now carefully read through the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, and notice the lessons drawn from the wilderness experience, as well as the application of them to very different circumstances in the land of Canaan. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep His commandments or not" (verse 2). So all their trials were to prove whether or not their hearts were true to the Lord. But if they had trials, God showed Himself as

their deliverer. And so the next verse gives us another view of the matter. "And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know: that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live" (verse 3). If they truly learned that lesson, they would be able to obey God in all that He commanded them. But if not, as surely as difficulties arose, so surely would the rebellion of their hearts manifest itself. We have seen how, at first, the want of bread caused them to remember with regret the abundance of Egypt. We have also seen how, later on, even when there was no lack of food, they longed to be back in Egypt, because they preferred

Egypt's fare. "There is nothing but this manna" they said despisingly; and, more terrible still, "Our soul loatheth this light bread" (Num. xxi. 5). Exactly in the same way, we find them, first of all, seeking another leader, because Moses was out of sight. While later on, with Moses before their eyes, they break out in open rebellion, saying, "Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt" (Num. xiv. 4). On the first occasion, they made no mention of Egypt themselves. Moses had gone up into the mountain with God, and nearly six weeks had passed away without one word from him. The people doubted if ever he would come back, and went to Aaron, saying, "Up, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him" (Ex. xxxii. 1). But the moment we turn away from what God has provided, we, in effect, turn away from God Himself, and are left to our own resources. How remarkably this is illustrated

in the case before us. Aaron tells the people to bring him their golden ear-rings. With these he makes a molten calf, and the people are perfectly satisfied. Not only do they accept this lifeless image to be their leader for the future, but they ascribe to it what had already been accomplished. "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." And let us remember that they had no idea that they were rejecting God in doing this. Aaron built an altar *before the calf*, and then made a proclamation—"To-morrow is a feast to Jehovah" (see verse 5). They had lost sight of Moses, and they wanted a substitute in his place—some one to lead them. But God had given them Moses as their leader, and had never withdrawn him. True, Moses had gone up to be with God for a while, but it was on their behalf, and he had said that he would come back again (Ex. xxiv. 14). What a solemn comment we get on all this in Acts vii. Stephen speaking of Moses, says (verse 39) "To whom

our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and *in their hearts turned back again into Egypt*, saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us. They could not trust God, and consequently they rejected the leader whom God had given. This, God calls *turning back in heart to Egypt*. It is the old Egypt principle of relying on what the eye can see. And wherever this prevails, there is no limit to the folly or wickedness that it leads to. Stephen says that in this leadership of the people of God, Moses was a type of Christ. First the Saviour, then the leader and ruler (see Acts vii. 35-37). When Israel thrust Moses away from them as their leader, they soon disowned him as their deliverer, and proclaimed the calf their own hands had made, as the instrument of their deliverance out of Egypt. Moses had led them through the waters. They had, in effect, died to Egypt, and been brought up from the dead, to live unto God. But in bowing down before this calf, they were carried back to

Egypt again in heart. Is it not so to-day? The authority of Jesus, as Lord, ruling in the house of God, is disowned. An unseen Lord fails to satisfy us, if we are in a carnal state. We substitute some human arrangement for Christ in the midst. Man's authority is accepted in place of the Lord's; and oh! what appalling results follow. At first, it was only done to secure decency and order in the assembly. Jesus was the Saviour, but, as to present authority, men wanted something they could see, and when that was provided, what then? Why, in process of time, human ceremonies and humanly appointed rulers not only supplanted the Lord Jesus as to His place in the midst, but were exalted as the very instruments of salvation. Christian parents suffer their children to be taught that they were made members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven, when they were sprinkled in the unconsciousness of infancy. It was never meant to come to this, doubtless, by those who first undertook to

organize some substitute to make up for the lack of divine power. "I cast it into the fire," said Aaron, "and their came out this calf," the very object of Egyptian worship. And so the whole idolatrous system of Rome has sprung from a like source. But what of those who reject, with horror, Rome's doctrine, and yet allow the root principle from which it sprang. Infant sprinkling is not the root; it is one of the evil fruits. The root is deeper down. It is the rejection of the Lord Jesus from the place God has exalted Him to. Eph. iv. shows us the ascended Christ bestowing all needed gifts upon His Church. Is it by all the human devices at present adopted to obtain a supply of pastors and teachers, that He bestows these gifts? Indeed not. These things are the outcome of the unbelief that thrusts Christ from His place, because He is not present to the senses. The promise of all His power is still where two or three are gathered together unto HIS NAME. "All authority is given

unto ME in heaven and in earth," He says in Matt. xxviii. 18, and concludes with the precious assurance, "And, lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the age." Baptism in this passage, as everywhere else, is an acknowledgment of His power and authority, who delivered us out of the authority of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Christ, preached in the Gospel, is received by the sinner as his Saviour. Then, in baptism, the saved one owns the power of Christ, with whom he is dead and risen again, and submits himself to His authority. Just as Israel were first brought under the shelter of the passover blood, and then were baptized in the cloud and in the sea (see 1 Cor. x. 2) unto Moses. Moses the instrument of their deliverance, now owned as the leader appointed by God. We have pointed to the root which has borne such evil fruit. We shall do well to watch jealously against it in ourselves. It is that evil heart of unbelief that turns from the *living*

God, and ends in being given over to the *dumb idol*. We may have been baptized as believers; we may keep outwardly all the ordinances as delivered to us in the Scriptures. But the end of Deut. viii. points to another danger—that, when they had eaten of Canaan's provision and were full, their hearts should be lifted up and they should forget that the Lord their God had brought them up out of the land of bondage. So might God be dishonoured by an evil use of Canaan's resources, as much as by lusting after Egypt's flesh-pots. And God ever takes them back to those divided waters of the Red Sea to cure them of each form of unbelief. Even so does our God ever draw us to the Cross of Christ, reminding us there of the awful bondage we were once groaning under, and of the mighty power by which our deliverance was accomplished.

—:o:—

ONE of the evil fruits of long-continued negligence, is the soul's ignorance of its own state.

THE PATHWAY OF THE BELIEVER.

WHAT is it? It is wherever the feet of Jesus would tread, were He on earth again. Would He confine Himself to our island, where we have been accumulating the light and keeping it to ourselves for centuries? Surely, among the 800 millions of the heathen, there would be many a simple heart to cry, "O Light of the world, come much rather unto us. We have never yet heard Thy good news, and these people care not but to sell us their merchandise, their rum and their whisky, their guns and their gunpowder." Would not the pathway of Him who came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance, who came to seek and to save that which was lost, lie past the door of these poor, perishing souls? Is He not the express image of Him who so loved, not the Jew only, but the world? The Son was sent at first unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Had they received Him they would

have been, as they will yet be in their blessed future, the messengers to make known His "saving health among all nations." But "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." To the church, therefore, during the time of Israel's rejection, the Saviour has given the command, after stating that all authority had been given unto Him in heaven and on earth: "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." We hear much about Baptism! How little about the "go ye"! Shall we be obedient in that which but signifies, and disobedient in the eternal realities? One thing is certain, we shall never "make disciples" till we are ourselves disciples. "Simply as disciples gathered," is what we often sing. Would to God that it were more true! Well would it then be for the millions abroad whom we

suffer to pass away to a dark eternity; well for the gospel-hardened at home, going down to a deeper damnation; well for the Church, with her waxing schisms and waning love; well for ourselves, that at the last we might hear the Master's voice, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." For what is a disciple? "If any man cometh unto Me, and hateth not his own father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he *cannot* be My disciple. Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after Me, *cannot* be My disciple." "So, therefore, whoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he *cannot* be My disciple." "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples." Identification with a risen Saviour in the work which He still seeks to carry on, through us, is the sure mark of discipleship. If Isaiah writes, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and

bring glad tidings of good things!" —these feet are beautiful just because they are the Lord's feet. "I am the light of the world." "Ye are the light of the world." Not the light of a focus of light, but the light of a whole world, that after nigh nineteen centuries since the gospel was entrusted and the marching orders given, is still covered with thick darkness.

What of us specially, in this matter, whom God has gathered mostly from among the comparatively poor; and those whose labour is manual, and to whom, therefore, it would not be so hard to sell all we have, or to find the means of subsistence anywhere—have we not a special call? And does not our very position of professed obedience and discipleship, and our knowledge of the written word, make us without excuse? Must it also be said of us: "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's"? Have we all had a general call from the Lord to stay here with our little candles in the full blaze? Let conscience answer!

In the face of the disobeyed command of our coming Lord, before whom we must give account, in the face of these perishing millions whom God loves, the question does not seem to be "who shall go?" but, "who shall stay?"

THE above has been sent us by a brother in the Lord, and we earnestly commend its stirring and searching words to our readers. Especially would we bespeak a prayerful consideration for the practical suggestion towards the conclusion. In the early days of the Church, the Lord suffered Jerusalem saints to be scattered by persecution. But the scattered ones went everywhere preaching the word, and so the gospel was spread abroad (see Acts viii. 3, 4). On all sides, the cry of slackness of trade, shortness of work, is heard in this land. Is not the Lord suffering this to come in as a scattering cause, that once again the gospel may be more widely spread? Mere going to another land will not, of course, make us heralds of salvation. Philip was a man of honest report, full of the holy Spirit and of faith, while he was in Jerusalem; and when he got driven away to Samaria, he was

mightily used in the salvation of sinners. If we are seeking our own here, we shall be likely to do the same elsewhere. But many, through the grace of God, have been faithful stewards of what God has entrusted to them of ability and opportunity in this land; and what a blessing for such to be sent into other lands to live and to preach Christ, where He is little known. While our hearts are stirred with sympathy for beloved children of God in sore distress in certain districts, through collapse of trade, shall we not do well, not only to minister to their present needs, but also to pray that God will show them plainly His mind as to this important matter? At the same time, we are not implying that the responsibility of carrying the gospel to the regions beyond, should only press on those who have lost their usual employment in the British Isles. It should surely be owned as a personal responsibility by each one of us. We are their debtors. May God help us to own it.

—:0:—

IMPATIENCE under God's corrections only shows our need of the discipline He is pleased to visit us with. We can least bear correction when we most need it.

TO BUSINESS MEN.

DEAR brother in Christ, is your business your slave? or are you a slave to your business? Let us have a little talk about this matter. Do you say at times to yourself, "I cannot go out to the meeting to-night, I have so much business to attend to"? And has this become a habit, so that your business has at last become the matter of *first* importance to you, and you repeat the words, "but business *must* be attended to," as if these were the words of Scripture? See to it, dear brother (or sister, it may be) that, from this day, you place Christ *first*, business *second*. The Lord knoweth what things ye have need of, and He never allows anything to take the first place but Himself. We fear numbers of young men have become as branches severed from the vine, because of business being placed *first*. It has grown by degrees in its demands upon them, and has become covetousness and idolatry in their hearts. Many opportunities

of service have passed for ever, and the canker of the gold will rise as a witness against us. Men in business for themselves can better arrange their time for the Lord, than can servants, to whom the Lord says "obey." Dear brother, see that you make your business His business, and that you are His steward in all its details. The hours, the pay of your servants, the punctuality, the keeping of promises, the doing of all well and faithfully, the keeping of books well—so that when the Lord comes, all may be found in order—the being linked in business only with the Lord's children, the charging of fair prices, neither selling too high, nor yet too low; the politeness and civility to customers, the speaking to them a word in season. All *for* Jesus, all *to* Jesus. If we are His, our all is His—see then that the business be our slave; and, if we make less through being faithful, we shall have more at the judgment-seat of Christ. Money made out of time which the Lord would have had us occupy differ-

ently, is lost. We cannot pray for a blessing on business that is conducted without regard to His claims and to His glory; and a business carried on without prayer, is a curse to the man in it. Let business be unto us a handmaid of the Lord, to be used to Him. "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, which, some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things." We seldom read of sermons or addresses against covetousness. Such as do well for themselves are praised. Let then the "muck rake" workers look above and look forward, and seek the true riches; and let our motto ever be—

The Lord first.

The Lord first.

THE LORD FIRST.

—:o:—

BE more desirous of inward help and deliverance than the removal of God's hand, when He lays affliction upon you.

THE FUTURE.

"Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Prov. xxvii. 1).

HOW blest to know that Jesus
Has all things planned for me,
Throughout the unknown future,
He only can foresee.
Assured, whate'er His wisdom
May think it best to send,
No room is left for doubting
With one who sees *God's* end.
Whether with joy or sorrow
My earthly cup He fill,
I know He is but working
The counsels of His will.

If bright and fairest sunshine,
Like one long summer's day,
Illumine all life's journey
With its unclouded ray ;
Then I shall praise the Giver
For these, His gifts divine,
And seek that His blest presence
Upon them all may shine.
While leaving still the morrow
In His dear loving hand,
Well knowing nought can happen
Save at my Lord's command.

But, should the blast of winter
My dearest hopes decay ;
Till one by one they wither
And quickly fade away ;
Ah! *then*, I'll look to *Jesus*,
Who knows no change nor end,

And find Him still, as ever,
My true, unfailing Friend.
And I'll not ask to fathom
Life's shrouded mystery ;
'Tis safer in His keeping,
And He will choose for me.

Oh ! sweet to feel His guiding,
When eyes with tears are dim ;
To take the Hand out-held me,
And just to follow Him.
Unheeding gathering darkness,
For Christ Himself is light ;
But looking towards the hill-tops,
Where morning riseth bright.
I see *beyond* the earth-mists
My long desired rest,
And the feet, so weary, hasten
To gain the mansions blest.

GLENVAR.

THE COMING OF THE LORD.

Rev. xxii.

(NOTES OF AN ADDRESS).

“**T**HE throne of God and of the
Lamb.” That is a beautiful
expression ; it tells of God's
sovereign grace and infinite loving-
kindness. “His servants shall serve
Him.” Every one who is purchased
by the blood of Christ is His servant
by right. Just as if a man had

purchased a slave, who, therefore, becomes his property. Every believer is purchased by the blood of Christ, and is made His servant. "Whose I am and whom I serve" (Acts xxvii. 23). Alas! His servants do not always serve Him now. But in the coming glory, all His servants shall serve Him always. They shall never serve self, still less shall they serve Satan. "They shall see His face." What a prospect that is for God's children! How much joy and blessing is contained in these words! O how blessed to look into the face of Him from whom all the glory of God shines forth—the face of Jesus! "His name shall be in their foreheads." They shall not be ashamed of Him, *for there, stamped on their brow,* shall be the name of the One to whom they belong. "There shall be no night there." It is the privilege of God's children now, in measure, to enter into the enjoyment of these blessings. Now we are called to serve Him; and with unveiled face, as in a glass, to behold the glory of the Lord. Even now it is our privilege to have His name, and that means His character, stamped upon our forehead. It is also our privilege now to have no night, no time of darkness; but to walk in the light and sunshine of His

countenance continually. To have, just now, our souls and our path enlightened by the glory of God. In the first instance, no doubt, these promises look to a time yet future, and we shall not fully enjoy them until the Lord comes; but, as God's beloved children, we may in some degree enter into them now through the Holy Ghost. "These sayings are faithful and true," that is, they are trustworthy, or worthy of all acceptance. They are worthy of the fullest confidence of the heart of every believer. These "sayings" are the words of God. These pictures that God draws of the future glory and blessing are not fairy tales or conceptions of the human imagination. They are faithful, trustworthy and true revelations of great eternal realities direct from God. Men may set aside the Scriptures of truth and make light of them; they may say that the Bible is full of mistakes and discrepancies; they may even question whether it is all inspired or not. But the one who has received it into his heart as the word of God, finds that it is *the truth* indeed. He can set to His seal that God is true, and that every word of the Bible concerning God's character and man's condition is absolutely

true. No other book under heaven tells the truth about the character of man, his innate sinfulness and wickedness, as God's Book does. No other book tells of such a God as the Scriptures reveal; a God of infinite holiness and inflexible righteousness, yet full of the tenderest love and mercy. The opened eye and understanding of every converted soul knows that this is God's Word that we have been reading. It is a blessed thing to begin the Christian life perfectly assured that every word in the Scriptures of truth may be fully and entirely trusted. I desire you to observe how prominently in this, the last chapter of the Bible, one future event, the coming of the Lord, is brought before us. Three times over in this chapter, He says, "I come quickly." The Lord desired, that this one event should be more prominently and constantly before the minds of His people than anything else. That before their hearts there should be one prospect, one joyous outlook, that would hold their souls as an anchor, giving them constant comfort, encouragement and hope; and that was His own return for His people to take them to be for ever with Himself. It is remarkable, that in the Scriptures, the

prospect of His return is treated under two directly opposite figures. Sometimes He speaks of His coming as that of a thief; and at another time, as the coming of the bridegroom for His bride. The one is an object of terror, and the other of deepest joy. Before we were converted, the coming of the Lord to us was an object of fear and dread, but now that we have got the question of our salvation for ever settled, we can look forward with joy to the coming of Christ to take those He loves to His embrace, to be for ever with Him.

I desire to speak very simply to God's dear children about this hope that is set before us in the Scriptures. Turn with me to Hebrews vi. 16 to 20: "Men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie." Here we have two immutable things, God's word and His oath. We read in Psalm cxxxviii. 2: "Thou hast magnified Thy word above (or upon) all Thy name." God's character is pledged to every word He has spoken. You see what a firm founda-

tion we have to rest upon. He confirmed it by an oath. This confirms the word of God in a most solemn manner. This is more than a mere promise, and is given in order that "we might have strong consolation." How strong is our consolation? Just as strong as the promise and oath of God. How strong is the assurance that Christ is coming for us? Just so strong, that God has promised and sworn it. Is that not strong consolation? Surely it is. "Who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us." O, sinner, have you fled for refuge? Believer, have you fled for refuge? Have you seen this world as it really is; poor, broken, stained and blotted by sin, and under the *judgment of God*? Have you fled for refuge to the Man who is as an hiding-place from the storm, and a covert from the tempest? Have you seen your sins on your track like so many ghosts? Have you seen the avenger of blood following hard after you, and have you fled to God's refuge, the wounded, bruised, smitten Son of God? O yes, we who have believed on Jesus, God's Lamb, made sin for us, have fled to Him for refuge. We are just poor refugees under the protection of the eternal almighty God. What is this hope set before

us that we have laid hold on? Turn to 1 Timothy i. 1: "God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, who is our hope." He is the hope set before the believer. We look back to the cross, and there we see Christ bearing our sins in His own body. Our faith rests on Christ crucified, and our hearts rejoice as we think of Him as the One who put away sin and removed every obstacle to our access to God. He is not only our Sin-bearer, but He is also *our hope*, and, as such, we look forward to a glorified Christ coming for us. All earthly hopes fail to satisfy; and, even should they be realized, they soon pass away. But here is a hope that God sets before His people, and it is an absolute certainty, and may be fulfilled very soon. He has set it before us, as the strong consolation that is to sustain our hearts continually, amidst the trials, sorrows and difficulties of this little while that we remain here. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." Jesus is the anchor of our soul; He has gone out of sight, inside the veil, there to appear in the presence of God for us. But there by the power of Christ we are held secure and sustained till He comes

again and takes us right up to where He is, within the veil. This refers to the most holy place in the tabernacle in the wilderness, where Jehovah dwelt, in type, in the midst of His redeemed people. "Christ is not entered into the holy-places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but, into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." What is meant by Jesus being our "Forerunner?" It means that there are others to follow. At the beginning of this epistle we read of Him as bringing many sons to glory. He is "the first-born among many brethren," and He is going to bring every one that believes on Him to glory. He has gone back to the bosom of the Father, where He dwelt before He was made flesh and tabernacled amongst us. But when He comes forth, it will be to take us up into heaven; into His Father's house, before the very throne of God, in then with Himself; the bride and Bridegroom together, to share all the love of the heart of God, and all the unsearchable treasure of the riches of Christ; to share His home and His glory throughout eternal ages. That is *our hope*, and it may be fulfilled very soon.

(To be continued.)

SELLING THE TRUTH.

THE lapse of years does not change God's truth; and what He showed us ten years ago by His Word and Spirit to be evil, is still evil. In the religious world around us, we can see denominations selling principles which in by-gone years had cost them almost everything that earth holds dear. What is the explanation? It is simply this, that the power of God has gone out, and the world has come in. There is something there for us to learn. Communion with God must be maintained at any cost, else truth we once prized will be held lightly, and perhaps bartered away for the world's smile. Even now, one can almost see the beginning of a bowing down to Haman the Agagite, under the plea of commending ourselves to the people. There is need to be faithful. "Buy the truth, and sell it not;" and the truth is like the Lord Himself—it changes not.

APRIL, 1885.

THE BELIEVER'S PATHWAY.

63

GOD IS ABLE.

“**G**OD is able.” This is enough. Circumstances may surround us, as dark clouds on every side, until we are at our “wits’ end.” We see no way out of our difficulties; and we wonder what is to be done. Or, rather, *unbelief* wonders what is to be done. But *faith* does not wonder. No matter what the circumstances may be, faith says, “God is able.” “But then,” some one says, “we don’t see how it is to be done.” True; but if you *did* see how it is to be done, where would there be room for faith? That would be walking by sight. Now we walk by faith, not by sight. It is just when we are at an end of ourselves that God is ready to come in. We just need a little of that faith which staggers not at the promise of God through unbelief, and that, if need be, against hope believes in hope (Rom. iv. 18).

“God is able to make all grace abound toward you” (2 Cor. ix. 8).

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“FAITHFUL IN THAT WHICH
IS LEAST.”

“HE that is faithful in that which is least,” said the Lord Jesus, “is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much” (Luke xvi. 10). But how apt we all are to forget that there is any serious responsibility as to the little things; and, as a consequence, how many sad breakdowns there are in weightier matters. If a brother, who had undertaken to preach the gospel, were to absent himself without any pressing necessity, what would be thought of him? But have not other brethren—yes, and sisters also—as direct a responsibility in connection with that gospel work as the one who was expected to preach. True, they may not have promised to be

present and take some particular part. But what has God laid upon them, and what does He expect of them? We fear that side of the matter is too often overlooked, and that this is just the reason why there is such sad lack of faithfulness about “*that which is least.*” In the New Testament, there are several Greek words that are translated by our English word “servant.” Two of these, however, are used far more frequently than all the others, and a little careful attention to these two words may help us greatly in the subject we are considering. The first is “*doulos,*” and means, literally, a bond servant, a slave, one who is the absolute property of his master. The second is “*diakonos,*” which signifies one who serves in any capacity, but is free, and can change his service if he pleases.

The relationship of believers in their service towards one another is generally expressed by this latter word. But our relationship towards God as His servants is continually set forth by the former. Thus the Apostle Paul delights again and again to refer to himself as the bond servant (*doulos*) of Jesus Christ; while, on the other hand, speaking of himself in connection with his service towards men, whether in first preaching the gospel to them, or in after teaching and shepherding work, he constantly employs the word "*diakonos*." The use of these two words helps to show us the two-fold character of all service, which is the same as if we said, of all our life. As parents we have responsibilities to our children; and as children we owe obedience to our parents. Husbands to wives, and wives to husbands; masters to servants, and servants to masters; every position and relationship brings its own responsibilities to those we are associated with. And so also in our spiritual relation-

ships. As children of God, we are in debt to the unsaved to preach the gospel to them; and to one another we owe loving care and mutual help. But all this is only one side of the truth. The other side is that we belong to God, that we are the bond servants of the Lord Jesus, having been bought with a great price, even His own precious blood; and that, consequently, our whole service is due to Him first of all. "Whose I am, and whom I serve" (Acts xxvii. 23), tells us the secret of Paul's steadfastness. He served God because he belonged to Him. That was a bond that could never be loosened, and it gave its character to all that the Apostle did. Corinthian saints, who at one time were ready to pluck out their eyes for him, might change in their affection; but Paul's loving ministry to them did not therefore slacken. Listen to his words, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved" (2 Cor. xii. 15). He was

the bond servant of the Lord Jesus; and the constraining love of Christ in his heart, as well as the claims of the mighty redemption price with which he had been purchased, alike bound him to the service which his Lord and Master had entrusted to him. In what we esteem great things, we are all probably willing to own this mighty principle. But it is just here that we need to remember the test that God applies. "He that is faithful in that which is least." Perhaps it is by our subjection to parents at home that God is proving us; or by our patient faithfulness in a trying situation under a provoking master or mistress. If God has placed me there, what does He expect of me? What will please Him? Or again, in service in the Church, are we doing whatever we do as the bond servants of Christ? Have I undertaken a class in the Sunday School, or to open the doors of the meeting-room, or to dust the seats or clean the floor, or visit certain houses with gospel tracts and an invitation to the

gospel meeting? Is this merely a bargain with fellow-saints that I can end at my pleasure, or is it a service entrusted to me by my Lord, that I dare not slacken in or give up except at His plain bidding? But have I taken up none of these things? Then why not? Have I diligently sought from Him what He would have me do; content to do the smallest thing, but purposed in heart to do that little thing well and faithfully, and to go on doing it till He bids me put it down? Moses fed Jethro's sheep for forty years, and then God Himself appointed him another work; and God could say of him afterwards, "He is faithful in all mine house." Oh, to get Paul's words deep down in our hearts, "Whose I am," and the "whom I serve" will surely follow.

—:o:—

If we are serving the Lord, we do not look for the applause of men. It is only when we are seeking to please them that we are discouraged by their disapproval.

“WHATSOEVER YE DO.”

(Col. iii. 17.)

THIS principle of the believer's pathway here below is plainly seen in three important points of Joseph's life. They may be called—

The minuteness of his obedience.

The minuteness of his kindness.

The minuteness of his diligence.

The first of these is seen in Gen. xxxvii. 12-18. Of course, it was sufficiently trying for Joseph to be sent to his envious brothers at all, especially to a distant place, and on an errand which apparently a servant of his father's could just as well have done as himself—viz., to bring word how they were. But with all *readiness* of obedience he goes, and reaches Shechem, the place his father had named. From thence he might very plausibly have returned, and said, “Father, I have been where you sent me, and they were not to be found.” But he knew his father wanted to hear news of them, and meant him to reach them. So on he went to

Dothan, and that too when it was only the slight clue of something a stranger had overheard his brethren say about Dothan that led him there! Truly this was fulness and completeness of obedience. In his measure, Joseph might have said to his father, in the words of David and of Christ (Psa. xl.), “I delight to do Thy will; yea, Thy law is *within my heart*.” For only that which occupies and fills the heart is ever carried out with such minuteness. And it was this going to Dothan—this heart and life obedience—that severed him from his father for over twenty years, and led him down into the pit in which was no water! But for his going on even to Dothan, Joseph might have escaped all this; but could he then have ever been the minutely-obedient son that he was? And how could he ever have reached the fulfilment of his dreams? Without this minuteness of obedience, how could Joseph have been such a type of Christ?—the One, who, for the joy that was set before

Him, endured the cross, despising the shame. What a lesson for us in these last days! God's road for us to exaltation and honour is along the path of obedience, and that also through all its patient and painful length. Only when Jesus could say (John xvii. 4), "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do," could He go on to say, "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me." And the power to tread this narrow path, even to its last and most rugged footstep, lay in that other word of His, "That the world may know that *I love* the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do" (John xiv. 31).

But we see in Joseph's example also, The minuteness of his *kindness* (see Gen. xl. 6, 7). Here Joseph was in those depths of humiliation into which the completeness of his obedience to his father had brought him. The Gentiles (Potiphar and wife) had sunk him into the pit (the word "dungeon," Gen. xl. 15, is the same as "pit," Gen. xxxvii. 24) of

their hatred and reproach of him, as his Jewish brethren had into the pit of "no water." Waves of undeserved sorrow were indeed rolling over him. As in Psa. lxxxviii. 18, he might say, "Lover and friend hast Thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." But instead of a sullen or selfish grief, which broods over its own sufferings, Joseph not only did active service in the prison so well that the keeper of the prison trusted all its matters to him, but his kindness led him to think more of the butler's and baker's troubles than of his own. Joseph had

"A heart at leisure from itself
To soothe and sympathize."

It was no part of his *duty* to do more than "serve" them—take them, perhaps, their daily meal. But when he "came in unto them in the morning, and *looked upon them*, behold, they were *sad*." This was enough for the observant eyes and minute kindness of Joseph, and the question, "Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day?" brought him the story of their dreams. And

this one item of kindness led on step by step to Joseph's exaltation. After two years, the liberated butler at length remembered him, recommended him to Pharaoh, and ere long Joseph was "over all the land of Egypt," using Pharaoh's ring, and exercising supreme authority under Pharaoh. How much turned on that one minute look and word of his kindness. And Psa. xlv. 2 says of Christ, "Thou art fairer than the children of men; *grace* is poured into Thy LIPS; *therefore* God hath blessed Thee for ever." The gracious lips of Christ did speedily exalt Him. "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do," were words out of the abundance of so gracious a heart that God raised Him from the dead, and gave Him glory. And is not Christ in this respect our pattern, and Joseph also? Solomon writes it as a general truth (Prov. xxii. 11), "He that loveth pureness of heart, and whose lips are gracious (see Hebrew) the King shall be his friend."

But a third point of Joseph's life

is the minuteness of his *diligence*. We see this in Gen. xlii. 5-7. Joseph was diligently at work over the corn that he had himself stored up; and it was by this means that he ever met his brethren, and received in the end their homage, and was made a blessing to their souls. "And Joseph was governor over all the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land . . . and Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them." One would have thought that, after so many years of toil and sorrow, Joseph would give himself a little luxurious ease; and leave the selling of the corn to his steward and others. But no—he himself superintends it; and thus the link was formed that united him at last to his erring, sinful brethren. Joseph was no fatalist nor idle opportunist, slothfully waiting for the dreams to be fulfilled which God had given him. Solomon says (Prov. x. 5), "He that gathereth in summer is a wise son, but he that *sleepeth in harvest* is a son that causeth shame;" and he has many other

proverbs on diligence. "Lo, I am with you all the days (see Greek), even to the end of the age," are the risen Saviour's words to show His diligence even now in His exaltation. Is He not truly present when the heavenly corn of His gospel is being dealt out? Mark xvi. 20 shows that He is. "They went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." And thus it is that the true Joseph keeps "adding" to Himself the "many brethren" for whom He died. Oh for grace to be similarly minutely diligent!—having our "feet shod with the readiness of the gospel of peace" (Eph. vi. 15); and "buying up the opportunities, because the days are evil" (Eph. v. 16). On what little things, then, hang great results—results great both for God's glory and for our own everlasting joy and gain. One moment's life-look for ever redeems the lost sinner: each moment's obedience, kindness, or diligence for ever enriches the believer.

"A M E N."

WE are all so accustomed to the word "Amen," that most of us probably have got into the way of using it without thinking much about it. Perhaps some of us have never even questioned what it means exactly, and yet in this little word are treasured up stores of strength and wisdom. The Lord Jesus calls Himself by this name. In Rev. iii. 14, He begins His message to the church in Laodicea by the words, "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness." And also we read in 2 Cor. i. 20, "All the promises of God in Him ("the Son of God, Jesus Christ," verse 19), are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." And His very last messages in the Word (Rev. xxii. 20, 21) are, as it were, sealed with this word, "Surely I come quickly. Amen." "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." This word "Amen" belongs originally to the Hebrew

language, the language of the Old Testament scriptures, the language of God's chosen people Israel. In the Old Testament then, searching "as for hid treasures" (Prov. ii. 4), we shall find, in the first place, some of the precious things in this word "Amen." There are several forms of this word to be found in the Old Testament, but all their meanings correspond with the word itself. They branch out from one another, and are closely connected together. The word "Amen" itself means "Faithfulness," "Truth," "Certainty;" while, formed out of it, we get words meaning, on the one hand, "to make firm," "to bear up safely;" and on the other, "to be upheld securely," "to be supported safely." Closely connected with these again, and derived from the same root, we get words meaning "to hold fast," "to trust." In this way we get a wonderful chain of thought connected with this precious word "Amen." First, God as the *faithful and sure upholder*; next, the believer *securely upheld and sup-*

ported, and so confidently *trusting* the God whose faithfulness he is assured of.

In Isa. lxxv. 16, "the God of *truth*" is literally "the God of *Amen*" or "faithfulness." And by this very same name the Lord Jesus calls Himself in Rev. iii. 14. In Isa. lxxv. 16, He is speaking to His unbelieving and faithless earthly people, so that His name of *Amen* declares Him as the unchanging Faithful One, in contrast with their wandering faithlessness towards Him. "If we believe not, He abideth faithful." And this name is, at the same time, a steadfast refuge and consolation to such as cling faithfully to Him, to His Name, and to His Word; and whom He calls "My chosen," "My servants," "My people." So also in Rev. iii. 14, etc, He is speaking to a faithless, backsliding people, and again His name is "Amen, the faithful and true witness."

If we who are "His own," "His chosen" now, did but realise the *faithfulness* of our Lord, how it

would shame us for our untrustworthy fickleness. He is the "Faithful and True Witness," both towards us and towards God. Faithful in what He says to us from God, and faithful in what He says for us to God. He is Moses and Aaron in one. Moses as a prophet, a messenger from God to man; Aaron as a priest, a representative and intercessor from man to God. Think of Jesus, the One who died for the sins of His people, passed up through the heavens, by His own blood, into the presence of God for us, representing us in Himself, "Jesus Christ the Righteous," "the Advocate with the Father," and "who ever liveth to make intercession for us"! (1 John ii. 1 and Heb. vii. 25.) Is there among these Laodiceans one who knows Him *to be faithful*, and therefore *leans upon Him, supported* from falling by His love known and believed? What light and joy and strength there will be to such an one in this name. And by-and-by, when every other foothold is failing, when every refuge of lies is

swept away, and every hiding-place is overflowed by the waters, the one who had built upon the Rock, who had leaned upon the great Amen, will find himself still upborne, and his resting-place a resting-place for ever. "To him that overcometh will I grant *to sit with Me in My throne.*" It is hard for a soldier to stand firm and true to his captain when panic-stricken comrades are turning their backs. It was not easy for one lonely man, sent out by his country, to hold his post amid false friends and thronging foes, relying on his country's aid that never reached him in time to save. The highest honours may be rendered to his memory, but the man himself was left to perish. Not so, however, with our God's overcomers: "Underneath are the everlasting arms," however boisterous the winds and waves, however desperate the circumstances, however impossible victory may appear, He *never fail-eth!* And the reward He will give shall be—not a marble effigy in our memory, after we have perished

in the struggle for His name—but a seat *with Him*, in life, as victors, upon His throne! The Word of God is a two-edged sword. So is this word, His name, “Amen.” Faithful in promising; faithful, too, in warnings of coming judgment. He is “Amen” to His servant John. Banished to lonely Patmos “for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus,” Jesus comes to him and says, “Fear not: I am the First and the Last and the Living One; and I was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore.” To Laodicea, He says, “I know thy works;” “I (the Amen) will spue thee out of My mouth.” The closing words, too, in the book of the Revelation are the utterances of the two-edged sword Amen: “These sayings are *faithful and true*” (verse 6); “I have sent Mine angel (or messenger) to *testify* unto you these things” (verse 16); “I *testify* unto every man” (verses 18, 19); then follow solemn warnings that no man dare add to, or take from, the words of “the faithful and true witness.” Finally, He

which *testifieth* these things, saith, “Surely I come quickly. Amen.” Those who love Him as the Faithful One will ever reply with John, “Even so, *come*, Lord Jesus.” The little waiting time until then is filled by His last word, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. *Amen*.” “The just shall live by faith”—faith in the Amen-Saviour of believing souls. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon Thee, because he trusteth in Thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is *everlasting strength*” (Isa. xxvi. 3, 4).

—:o:—

It is vain for us to praise God for what He has done for our souls—it is vain for us to declare how sure we are of being in heaven, if we are not manifesting the Spirit of Christ. His Spirit is of that meek and gentle character whose very presence declares that its possessor has a home in heaven. It is well to stand still, and ask ourselves the question: “What manner of spirit am I of?—Have I the Spirit of Christ?”

THE COMING OF THE LORD.

[NOTES OF AN ADDRESS.]

Continued.

I CHARGE you to look with suspicion on any theory of prophetic interpretation, that puts any period necessarily between the present time and the coming of Christ. Scripture contemplates us as waiting and looking for the Son from heaven. God's Word puts nothing between us and that blessed hope, and God forbid that we should interpose a hindrance. That the Scriptures show that many things have still to be fulfilled is perfectly plain; many things concerning Israel and the world, which will, every one of them, certainly take place. But none of these things are set before us as having to be accomplished before the Lord comes for His church, and consequently, it is our privilege to live in the daily expectation of that hope being realized by us. Look at a passage that shows this: "I go to prepare a place for you, and, If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John xiv. 1-3). It is just as if the Lord had said unto

them, "I would never think of going away there, to be for ever without you; if there was not plenty of room in My Father's house, I would have told you so. I am going away, but, I am coming back for you to take you to be with Myself." Observe that the Lord does not say much about the mansions, or the place in His Father's house that He was going to prepare for His people. He knows that it is neither the place nor the mansions that shall satisfy them—nothing but Himself shall satisfy the hearts of His beloved ones. What would the mansions and the place in the glory be to His redeemed people, without Himself? What would that home be to the bride if the Bridegroom was not there? She would care nothing for it.

"The bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear Bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory,
But on my King of Grace.
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hand:
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's land."

Mark the desire of His heart. Never did bridegroom love a bride as Christ loved the Church. "He loved the Church and gave Himself for it" (Eph. v. 25). "He loved me and

gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). Now, He is waiting the moment appointed by the Father, and, in one instant, He shall descend like the lightning's flash, from the throne of God to take His blood-bought Bride to be His companion for ever. That is our hope—it is to be with Him for ever. Turn to another passage in this connection (1 Thess. iv. 14-18). You would observe in that passage in the 14th of John what gave rise to the precious words that fell from the lips of the Son of God. He was going away from them; and further on in the chapter He tells them that He was going to send them another Comforter, whose work it should be to stir up their hearts to long to see and be with Him. Whilst the Holy Spirit assures our hearts of the love of Christ, and communicates of His love to our souls, He also creates in our hearts a longing for His coming. In the 14th chapter of John it is the sorrow of the present hour that calls forth these words of comfort from the Lord; and so it is also in this other passage. "The Lord Himself shall descend." It is not a deputation; not even an angel nor a troop of angels, but the Lord Himself. "The dead in Christ shall rise first." Observe that the dead

out of Christ (those who have not believed on Him), do not rise then; they shall lie mouldering in their graves throughout the whole Millennial period: and during that time their souls shall be existing in hopeless despair (2 Pet. ii. 9). "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. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words." Have you wept over the remains of one, dearly beloved, who had departed to be with Christ; which is far better than abiding here in a world of sin and sorrow? I know I touch a cord in many a heart: but the comfort that the Lord gives His loved ones in such seasons of sorrow is the certain hope that they shall be restored to us, and we to them, in the presence of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. We read in the Gospels of three instances of our Lord raising the dead. One of them was Jairus' daughter, a young child just twelve years of age. The Lord raised her up again, and left her with her parents. He just said, "give her something to eat," and went away after having restored the broken link. The next was the widow's son of Nain, who was being carried out on a

bier, to be buried. When the Lord saw the widow, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, "Weep not," and then He said, "Young man, I say unto you arise, and he that was dead sat up and began to speak, and He delivered him to his mother." O what joy it gave the heart of Christ to raise that dead son, and give him back, alive from the dead, to the loving embrace of his mother! Lastly there is the case of Lazarus, who had been four days dead. The Lord called him forth from the tomb and restored him to his sorrowing sisters. These three instances are just little pictures of the ways of our Lord in resurrection. Although the brightest thought that can be possibly set before us is to see Him and be like Him, yet the Lord does not despise the joy of His people in the prospect of seeing again those whom they have loved in the Lord; those with whom they have taken sweet counsel, and who are one with them in life eternal. It is blessed to see how the Lord, as it were, brings together all the rays of love, joy, and comfort. They are summed up in that blessed hope, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Turn with me now to 1 Cor. xv. 51 to 58, "Behold I show you a mystery." When the Apostle says "I show you

a mystery," he means that he is telling of something that was kept secret from before the foundation of the world; something that never was revealed before. What is it? "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Can you find that thought in the Old Testament? No. It is true that we have resurrection pre-figured in many ways, and translation without death foreshadowed in Enoch and also in Elijah, both of whom were taken up to heaven without tasting death. But it was not revealed in the Old Testament that there would be a company of believing people on the earth who should not taste death. We are not fit, in our present condition, to bear the presence of the glory of God; we could not endure it. When John, in the Isle of Patmos, saw the glorified Christ, he fell at his feet as dead. We must all be changed before we can enter the glory or look upon that glorious face. Think of that light which shone from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, which smote Paul so that he fell blinded to the ground. Yet we can rejoice in hope of the glory of God. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." "The Lord Jesus shall change the body of our humiliation,

and fashion it like unto His glorious body," or "the body of His glory." Christ's image shall be stamped upon every one of us. We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." That is the way that the Lord will do His work, when He comes. It will be the most delightful work He ever had to do, when He raises the dead out of their graves, and changes the living. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory." That will be the triumph of Christ.

"Oh, joy! oh, delight!
Should we go without dying."

Is this not a most blessed prospect for the believer in Christ? When the body is dead it is corrupt, and when it is living it is mortal. If I am living, I am subject to mortality, and if dead, subject to corruption. The thought here in these words—"Death is swallowed up in victory," refers to Moses when he cast down his rod and it became a serpent, and the magicians of Egypt cast down their rods and they also became serpents; but, Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods, and so death shall be swallowed of victory. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast

unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" &c. Mark the practical bearing of this verse. Dear friends, in prospect of such a hope we can go on labouring and labouring "knowing that our work is not in vain in the Lord." He says in Rev. xxii. "Behold I come quickly and My reward is with Me, to give to every man according as his work shall be." Let us go on labouring stedfastly, assured that our labour is not in vain. It may seem to be in vain, and we may become wearied in it, but "let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not" (Gal. vi. 9). The world may count us fools, but it shall be seen by-and-by who the fools are. The coming of the Lord is brought in here in connection with service to Him. In the midst of all our work for Him, He would encourage us to go on unwearied in it, to His glory. Turn to Heb. x. 35-37; "Cast not away therefore your confidence which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise, for yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." There the coming of the Lord is brought in to encourage

us to patience under persecution. If you have taken joyfully the spoiling of your goods, you have done so because you know that you have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. If you have lost something for Christ, remember that you will get ten thousand times more than ever you have lost. In 1 John iii. 2, 3, we see the coming of the Lord in another aspect. "*We know* that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is, and every one that has this hope in Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure." Here we have the coming of Christ as a purifying hope, separating us from the world, and bringing us into conformity to Christ. You see how practical this hope is, that while our Lord is absent from this world, engaged in service before His Father for us, and while we are here in the midst of trial, sorrow, persecution, and work for Him, God brings in this hope to encourage us to keep pressing on against the current, amidst the buffeting of the waves, with our eye fixed on that blessed, glorious hope. If we have lost the power, the comfort, the joy, and the encouragement of this blessed hope, may God use these words in stirring it up afresh in our hearts.

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CONFESSION.

A GREAT deal passes for confession, which, if tried by the divine standard, would prove not to be genuine confession at all. God has attached two unspeakably precious promises to a real confession—namely, forgiveness and cleansing. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John i. 9). But if the confession is unreal, we must not suppose that there will be either forgiveness or cleansing. In speaking thus about forgiveness, we must take care not to get our minds confused in regard to the forgiveness which the gospel proclaims to a lost sinner. When Paul was preaching in the synagogue at Antioch, this was his confident language to the unsaved

ones who were listening to him, “Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the *forgiveness of sins*; and by Him, all that believe *are justified from all things*” (Acts xiii. 38, 39). This forgiveness is complete the moment a sinner believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, and can never be added to or taken from. “In whom we have redemption through His blood, *the forgiveness of sins*” (Eph. i. 7). It changes our position, once for all, from that of condemned sinners before a righteous judge, to that of children in the presence of a loving father. But God’s forgiveness of our sins, in His character as a father with his children, is quite distinct from all this; and it is this that we are now considering. The special character of John’s first epistle is, that it

addresses us throughout on the ground of our relationship to God as children with the Father. So this double promise of forgiveness and cleansing, as connected with confession, belongs to the children of God only, and has to do with our continued fellowship with God and our walk before Him. But if a genuine confession is the condition upon which the promise depends, how important to understand what God really means by confession. On the one hand, many a true-hearted believer, who has honestly confessed his sin before God, still walks on at a distance from God, and with no rest in his soul, because he has failed to grasp the blessed truth that the Father is faithful and just to forgive him. But, on the other hand, we fear that too many, who have learned the truth in the letter, content themselves with a few words of confession, and then assume that forgiveness follows, while, all the time, there is no true restoration of soul to communion with God. As a natural conse-

quence, there is no cleansing either; and the same sin is fallen into, time after time: while, in some cases, there is actually less and less exercise of conscience before God about it. It may help us to look at a few cases of apparent confession, in which the conditions of a genuine heart acknowledgement are wanting. We might begin with Adam and Eve. They could not deny their guilt; but each of them in turn makes an excuse, and tries to put off the blame on to some one else. Oh how common this is, and how plainly it betrays that sin has not been rightly judged before God. Nobody else's sin can be the smallest excuse for me, and I am adding greatly to my own sin in supposing that it is. If God is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able (see 1 Cor. x. 13), then nothing can justify or even palliate my fault. To see sin, as it touches God Himself, will surely put an end to all attempts at putting off the blame on to another, or even seeking to share it with another.

Now let us turn to Pharaoh. On two occasions we find him with the words of confession in his mouth, as he trembled under the heavy judgments with which God was visiting his land. "I have sinned this time," he says to Moses, "the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked" (Ex. ix. 27). And again, "I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you" (chap. x. 16). The words sound fair enough, but it is easy to be seen that the only motive in Pharaoh's confession was to get rid of the judgment that pressed on him. There was no true sense of what sin was in his heart, no humbling about it before God; and, consequently, there could be no real confession. It is true that these are cases of unregenerate persons. For after Adam had sinned, and before he had heard and believed the word of promise, the message of reconciliation, he was afar off from God in his heart. But the characteristics of unreal confession in a believer are just the same as in an unbeliever, whose

confessions never can be genuine, because sin has never been seen and judged in God's light. How often has such an acknowledgment as Pharaoh's been wrung from the lips of a child of God, under the pressure of sore chastisement; while the removal of the rod has only made plain that it was the punishment and not the sin that had been filling the disobedient one with anguish. It is well to ask ourselves whether we would sooner the chastening was continued, rather than that God should withdraw it and leave our will still unsubdued, our fleshly lust still having the mastery over us. We have reason to stand in doubt of our confessions of sin, when they are coupled with the request that God will at once deliver us from trial. Then, again, we might look at Achan. He made a full confession at last, "Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done" (Jos. vii. 20). But he never opened his lips till he was manifested as the transgressor in the

face of all the congregation of Israel. He had seen Israel fleeing before their enemies, and he cannot but have known the reason. Then came the plain declaration of God, "Israel have sinned, . . . they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff" (Jos. vii. 11). In thus plainly describing the sin, while still keeping back the name of the offender, God was graciously giving him an opportunity to make a voluntary confession, but Achan was silent. Even after this, God waited another day; for it was only on the morrow that the tribes were gathered together for God to reveal who was the guilty person. The tribe of Judah was taken, the family of Zerah, the household of Zabdi, and still Achan uttered no word. Then man by man the descendants of Zabdi were brought forward, till the finger of God pointed out Achan as the troubler of Israel. What is his confession worth now? It is no evidence of repentance,

and does not shield him from the righteous judgment of God in regard to his sin. We would not say that no confession can be real that is only made after it is impossible any longer to hide sin from view. But it is very sure that many a confession, humble enough as far as words go, springs from no other source than the feeling that there is nothing else to be done, and God is not honoured by it at all. We might refer to Judas also, and his bitter despairing acknowledgment of his awful crime. "I have sinned," he said, as he cast down the thirty pieces of silver that he had long coveted, and that now seemed to be like molten lead, consuming his very vitals. But there was no faith in that confession, only hopeless remorse. The very torments of hell had already seized upon him, and in hell no one denies his sin. The confession which brings forgiveness and cleansing must needs be mixed with faith. It is the knowledge of God's grace that alone leads to repentance, and real confession is the language of the truly repentant soul. We shall hope to continue this important subject next month.

THE WELLS OF ISAAC.

(Gen. xxiv. 62: xxvi. 17-33.)

THESE wells undoubtedly describe to us the experience of Isaac's pilgrim life, during the period with which they are associated; and they may therefore help us, who are God's children, and heirs of the promise, to understand how we may cultivate and maintain communion with our God in all the details of our daily life; for Isaac's life is a type of communion. The first of these wells, then, is "Lahai-roi," or the well of "Him that liveth and seeth me." If we look back a few years prior to this, we shall find that this well is first mentioned in connection with Hagar, when she fled from the hand of her mistress, Isaac's mother (see Gen. xvi. 14), and further, that it was from this incident that the well received its name. Here it was that Isaac dwelt, and here it was he received blessings from the hand of God (chap. xxv. 11). Beloved children of God, what do we know of this dwelling-

place in our daily experience? Are we consciously living in the presence of an ever living and all-seeing God? Is it here that we receive our daily blessings? Or are we seeking to provide for ourselves from the resources of the world; and thus, not only losing blessings, but robbing God of the place which He loves to have over His people as their Jehovah-jireh. "The Lord who provides"? In our unconverted days, the very thought that this well brings before us, would have struck terror to our souls; because we knew Him not as the Jehovah-jireh. But since we have beheld the Lamb of God's providing, and found Him to be the very One our souls needed, it ought to be our constant joy to know that God our Father lives and sees us. When children are playing in the room where their father and mother are sitting reading, or otherwise engaged, why is it that the parents' attention is constantly being attracted by the cry from one or another of their children. Father!

mother! see father! see mother! and that the little one will not cease calling until father and mother have looked to see what the child is occupied with? Is it not because it is part of that child's nature to enjoy the presence and fellowship of its parents? Let us seek, as children of God, to cultivate this spirit of finding our joy in the consciousness of our Father's smile upon us. But how blessed to remember that our heavenly Father is never so pre-occupied that, like our earthly parents, He has to be aroused, and we have to wait before we know that He sees us, for His eyes are ever upon us, and He never slumbers nor sleeps (Psalm xxxiv. 15; cxxi. 1-4). There is, however, another side to this blessed truth of His ever living and seeing us. While the presence of an earthly parent increases the joy of the children, yet it also restrains them from doing the things that the parent has forbidden. Thus Moses speaks of the presence of God with Israel in Ex. xxxiii. 16. It is this separating power of the presence

of God which provokes the enmity of the world around us, and which we find manifesting itself at the next two wells of Isaac. First at Esek (Gen. xxvi. 20). This we see from the margin means "contention." And who amongst us has not had, at some time or other, to meet with this unprincipled contention from the hands of the world? So the question arises, how are we to meet it? Let the example of Isaac teach us. Isaac's servants dig a well in the hope of gaining water for themselves and their cattle; and, to their joy, they open up a well of springing water, so that, even in the *driest* season, they will have a never-failing supply. But their new found treasure is shortly to prove a deep trial to them; for, as soon as the herd-men of Gerar find out the secret, they at once begin to dispute with Isaac's servants their title to the water they had found. Isaac might well have maintained his right, for his servants had digged the well. But he would not strive, for he knew that God who made the springs of water

could also make room for him in peace. So we find him quietly giving up the well and digging another. But he only meets with further opposition, and therefore, names the well "Sitnah," or "hatred." Well, surely, says some one, he will defend himself this time. A man could not live in the world if he did not look after his own interests at some time or other. Let Isaac again teach our restless spirits a lesson. "And he removed from thence and digged another well." Is this the way we are to act when people manifest a bitter spirit against us? Most undoubtedly it is. This is the way the Lord Jesus acted, and it is the way the Scriptures teach all His followers to act also. And, moreover, it is the way we must act if we are to maintain communion with Him, and be used in His service. "No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2 Tim. ii. 4). The Government are responsible to

provide all men in their service with daily rations. So our God and Father has undertaken to provide for all His children food convenient for them, and not a single need shall be un-supplied (Phil. iv. 19). But let us see that we are content to abide His time, and to receive in His way. So when Isaac, as mentioned already, removed, and digged the third time, it was then he found that the Lord had made room for him; "and now," says he, "we shall be fruitful in the land." Do we not often mourn, dear fellow-believers, that we are not more fruitful unto the Lord? Well, now, let us look round and ask ourselves the question—has the Lord made room for me? If not, it is impossible for me to grow and be fruitful. You know a plant that is cramped up for room will never be a thriving, healthy plant, but stunted and dwarfed. So it is with us, as plants in the Lord's vineyard. Are we in the place where God has put us? If so, then we may expect to be fruitful to Him. But, if it is an

Esek or a Sitnah that we are striving about, there will be no fruit for our blessed Lord. But to proceed. "And he went up from thence to Beersheba" (v. 23). Notice the change—"went up." Isaac's experience, so far, had been that of humiliation. Now God was about to exalt him—"He that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke xiv. 11). Let us, therefore, take heed to this lesson, and we shall be duly rewarded (see James iv. 10; 1 Pet. v. 6). And this brings us to the last of these interesting wells, "Beersheba," the well of the oath. Here the Lord Himself appears to Isaac, and renews the promises which He had made before to Abraham. "Let your moderation (yieldingness) be known unto all men, the Lord is at hand" (Phil. iv. 5), seems to be beautifully illustrated in this. The man who dwelt under the eye of the living God, could afford to yield, when others were striving. But here, also, Isaac's former enemies are compelled by the Lord to come and own that God

is with him, and to seek from him a promise that he will not avenge himself upon them. The child of God need never do this, for "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord" (Deut. xxxii. 35; Heb. x. 30), therefore Isaac sends them away in peace (verse 31). And in this we get an illustration of the truth of Prov. xvi. 7—"When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." God is indeed a living God, and there is no want to them that fear Him.

—:o:—

"By might shall no man prevail." If you take up the sword to claim and make good your "rights," you need not reckon on the help of God in the matter. If you take your own case in hand, you will be allowed to fight it out yourself. But if you commit your way to the Lord—if you roll the whole burden on Him, He will send deliverance in due time. "Wait thou my soul upon the Lord."

THE SPIRIT'S GUIDANCE IN THE ASSEMBLY.

“**D**OES no one ever speak unprofitably in your meeting?” we were asked one day by a brother in the Lord. “Oh, yes,” we replied, “to our shame we have often to acknowledge that much has been said that was not at all to edification.” “But I thought your theory was that the Holy Spirit directed all that was said in your meetings; and if so, is the Holy Spirit the author of unprofitable and unedifying talk?” We need not follow this particular conversation further, but as this is a difficulty that seems present in many minds, we will seek to get help from the Scriptures in regard to it. In the first place, let us take care that we are not bolstering up any theory. We want a spirit of real, child-like submission to the Word of God. What we find there we must bow to, and if, in our endeavour to carry out the teaching of God's Word, failure is apparent, let us

never dream of attributing the failure to God, or of turning to some other source to find a remedy. In a human body, there are many members all controlled by one mind. They act harmoniously together; but not as a machine does, whose parts are mechanically forced to move in a certain way. There is no such outward, mechanical control over the members of the body, and yet the harmony is complete. But supposing that that harmony of action is interfered with. The members are nervously twitching, or are violently distorted, and there is evidently an absence of the proper control that we have referred to. We are certain, at once, that some disease is present; but we do not dream of finding fault with our bodily organization, or propose to find out a substitute for God's wonderful arrangement of a body indwelt by a living, reasoning spirit and soul. Just so, in regard to the order of God's house, of the assemblies of His saints. God's way is a perfect way, but our carrying out of the way of

God is sadly imperfect, and it is these two things that are so often confounded. Perhaps the difference is more readily understood in connection with the individual believer. Each believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you?" (1 Cor. vi. 19). And the indwelling Spirit teaches and guides those in whom He dwells. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 14). "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth" (John xvi. 13). That is God's perfect way for each of His redeemed ones. But what should we think of a Christian who said, "I cannot do wrong or make a mistake. What I say is the utterance of the Holy Spirit, for He dwells in me, and leads me into all truth"? We find no difficulty here in distinguishing between the perfection of God's provision, and the imperfect use we make of it. And it is exactly the same whether we con-

sider the individual saint or the assembly. If a believer is giving way to jesting and unseemly conversation, we do not say that, because the Spirit of God dwells in him, this foolish talking is dictated by the Spirit; neither do we say that it is evidently untrue that God's Spirit dwells in him, or he could not speak thus. But we do point out to him, that just because the Spirit dwells in him, such ways are wholly unbecoming, and we exhort him to walk worthy of the calling he is called with. Apply all this to the assembly of saints. In 1 Cor. xii. the apostle is speaking to the Corinthian believers as to spiritual gifts and their exercise, and he says (ver. 7), "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." And again, after mentioning various gifts of the Spirit (ver. 11), "But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." In Eph. iv. we are carried back a little further, and are taught, that when the Lord Jesus went back to

the right hand of God, He bestowed, and ever since, continues to bestow, gifts upon His church. In the twelfth and following verses, we learn what the object of these gifts is: "For the perfecting of the saints *unto* the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ" (see Rev. Ver.). This is God's perfect way, and just casts us upon Himself for everything. If we come together with lowly, prepared hearts, and really trust Him, nothing will be wanting. But if our hearts are absorbed with other matters; and we come together hoping that some one, with gift and leisure, will say something to cheer and comfort us, there is little wonder if we are disappointed. The Lord Jesus will indeed rule where He is truly owned, and His place is given to Him. The Holy Spirit will speak by one and another to the help and blessing of all, when He is ungrieved. Consequently, when there is unedifying talk, and cold, lifeless words, or hymns of praise, it is a sure sign that something is

wrong with ourselves. And we cannot separate ourselves from our brethren and sisters in all this. We must needs share in the consequences of one another's failure; and so God knits us all together, and teaches us to care for one another. The worship and the ministry will be a sure index to the general condition of soul. Then, where failure is manifest, do not let us blame God's way, and proclaim it to be an exploded theory; but let us rather humbly cast ourselves upon God Himself, who alone can make His own way work effectually.

—:o:—

ALTHOUGH one man has it in his power to do a great deal of good, it is likewise true that one man has it in his power to do a great deal of harm. The case of Achan proves this. He sinned, and Israel was defeated. How wonderful then the enquiry: "What is the state of my own soul?—Has the general cold state of things any connection with *my* spiritual condition?"

**“THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY
FAITH.”**

FOUR times we find this written in God's Word. God never uses “vain repetitions” like man. In each of these four passages, then, He has some special and distinct lesson to teach us, but we shall also find that, whenever He would emphasize what He has to say, He gives it more than once, though in different ways. First then, it is written in Hab. ii. 4:—It was an evil time. The ten tribes of the kingdom of Israel had been taken away into captivity nearly a hundred years before, yet the two remaining tribes of the kingdom of Judah had not profited by the solemn warning. These children of Abraham, after the flesh, are just a sample of human nature under the best culture—unbelief and consequent faithlessness marked them throughout. In the days of Moses, God calls them “a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith” (Deut. xxxii. 20). In the

days of David, “a people that do err in their heart (literally ‘wanderers in heart’), they have not known My ways” (Psalm xcv. 10). And long after the days of Habbakuk, we find the Apostle Paul writing words of warning to the professing Christians from among the Hebrews, “Take heed, therefore, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God” (Heb. iii. 12). In the days of Habbakuk the sins of Judah had risen to such a height, and their revolt from God was so complete, that the judgment was already hanging over them; and not long after, they too were swept away into captivity, and their land became a desolation.

“The burden which Habbakuk, the prophet did see.” Habbakuk means “the embosomed one.” It was to John who leaned on Jesus' breast that “the revelation of Jesus Christ” was given, and the visions of judgments coming upon the world. So here, also, to the embosomed one, God makes known what others

are too far away to hear. The embodied one becomes the prophet messenger—responsible to make known what he had seen and heard. It is a burden to him till he has given his message—“He that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully.” What he sees, troubles and perplexes him. God’s chosen but erring people are to be smitten by a nation far more evil than they. The perplexity is not that Jehovah should chasten His people. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: *therefore* will I punish you for your iniquities” (Amos iii. 2). “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.” But why, Lord, use such an instrument to be the scourge of Judah, and “holdest thou thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?” Now comes the precious answer. “The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and shall not lie: though it tarry, *wait for it*: because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold his soul which is lifted up

is not upright in him, but the just shall live by his faith.” He is then shown the short triumphing of the wicked, and the coming of the glory of the Lord (the Messiah of Israel) in judgment upon all evil-doers, and for the salvation of His people. Well might the message be, “though it tarry, wait for it.” Judgment must begin at the house of God: but it will not stop there. God deals with His own people here, and often are they disciplined by Him through the ungodly around, who use their opportunity in cruel and oppressive triumph. “My son, *despise not* thou the chastening of the Lord”—his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him—“*nor*,” on the other hand, “*faint* when thou are rebuked of Him,” for “the just shall *live* by his faith.” The word used for “faith,” here, is rather the word for “*faithfulness*.” It is the same word that is used in Deut. xxxii. 4, “a God of truth” (“*faithfulness*”), and without iniquity. It is not exactly “amen,” here, but another form of the same word. In Psalm lxxxix this word

occurs in verses 2, 24, 33 (and also in verse 49, where it is rendered "truth"). These references will shew how it is generally used and understood, and may help us to understand its meaning in Hab. ii. 4. "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, *a sure foundation*: he that believeth shall not make haste" (Isa. xxviii. 16). "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. iii. 11). "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is their salvation in any other: for there is none other name, under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 11, 12). When all things are being shaken around, when evil is abounding, and lawlessness triumphant, when those who have been roused by God's mercy to flee from "the wrath to come," learn that the impending judgment of God hangs ready to fall, and that all the evil and sorrows are but harbingers of

the coming woes, then the one crying need of the heart is for a sure refuge, a foothold that will bear him up, and not give way, a sure, a steadfast, a *faithful* foundation. To the sinner overwhelmed by the knowledge of his own sinfulness and guilt, what resting-place, what refuge and foothold, does God offer? The Coming One, His Son, a Victim first for the sin; and then a Deliverer from the evil around; and, lastly, a coming Saviour from the presence of all evil. "The just shall live by *His faithfulness*." "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19).

(To be continued).

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to hear about anybody but Christ." "Not this Man," seems still to be the cry of the multitude. If some preacher with the fire of God about him had been intimated to preach the old Gospel of Jesus Christ, the audience would have presented a very different appearance. We need to beware how we try to please the itching ears of the people. The aim of many is to preach what will *take with the multitude*. Brethren, let us preach *Christ*. Paul determined to know nothing among men save Christ crucified. Many take their "text" out of the Bible, but take their hearers to a place called Khartoum, instead of taking them to Calvary. The Lord has not sent us to preach men, although they may be good men, or even heroes in the eyes of the world. Let us keep to the old Gospel. It is only *Christ* lifted up that can draw men to Him.

—:o:—

SATAN is full of subtlety, and, to discern his wiles, we must see if the thing proposed leads us into disobedience to God. When we lean on Christ, the victory is gained.

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Vol. 6.

“UNDERSTANDEST THOU
WHAT THOU READEST?”

“**H**OW am I to know which is right? All Christians say they believe the Bible; but then they have such different ways of interpreting it.” Such is the answer we commonly receive when we press upon children of God the claims of God's Word for implicit obedience. And, in many cases, it is but too plain that this is only an excuse to justify themselves for disobedience to some of the plainest precepts of the Scriptures. Then the sceptic taunts us with the same thing. “Christians cannot agree among themselves what the Bible means. Every sect wants you to believe their particular views, and say that they are right; and it just seems that the Bible can be made to

mean anything you please.” What are we to say to all this? Has God left us without any help in the midst of all this confusion? Oh, no, say the Romanist and the Ritualist, God has put a teaching power, an interpreting authority, in His Church. The Church interprets the Scriptures, and we are bound to receive the interpretation. “Do you believe this Book to be the Word of God?” we asked recently of a would-be Ritualistic priest, as we held up our Bible.” “Not when it is in your hands;” was the reply, “only when it is interpreted by the Church.” “By their fruits ye shall know them,” said the Lord Jesus, and Christendom tells us what comes everywhere of such pretensions. First, the grossest superstition, and, following that, wholesale infidelity. Now, in the face of all this, we would

earnestly press upon the attention of young believers, especially, that the differences of doctrine and practice among professing Christians, do not at all, in most cases, arise from differences of interpretation of scripture. Perhaps this statement will rather startle some. But let us consider what we mean by interpreting scripture. It certainly *does not mean coming with some notion that never was got from the Word of God at all, and trying to get a number of passages, without any reference to their context, to give this notion some show of support.* We read of Ezra, that he had "prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments" (Ezra vii. 10). And, afterwards, we find him at Jerusalem, carrying out what he had prepared his heart to do. He was one of those of whom it is said, "They read in the Book, in the law of God, distinctly; and gave the sense, and caused them (the people) to understand the reading" (Neh. viii. 8). There is little differ-

ence of doctrine or practice either, where teachers and hearers act as they did that day in Jerusalem. Just think, for a moment, of a few of the things that people contend about. Who ever pretended to find infant sprinkling in the Scriptures? Persons who have accepted it from human tradition, attempt to show that it might have been practised in New Testament times. They imagine that there might have been an infant in one of the few households that are spoken of as having been baptized. But there is no interpreting of scripture in all that; but rather a forcing into scripture of something brought from outside it. Then again, who ever found in the Bible that congregations ought to salary official persons as their ministers? People who have made up their minds that this is necessary, or, at any rate, expedient, in these days, make painful attempts at justifying the practice, by reference to certain texts. But they never found the thing itself in God's Word. Paul warned the elders of the Church in

Ephesus, that from among themselves men would arise, speaking perverse (literally, twisted) things, to draw away the disciples after them. Twisting of scripture, to make it agree with some old tradition or some newly invented theory, has ever been an expedient of those who, consciously or unconsciously, were drawing the disciples after themselves. But, in even more cases, scripture is set on one side altogether. It is a very convenient phrase to say, "We all go by the Bible, but we interpret it differently:" but when those who say this are pressed for their reason for neglecting plain "commandments of the Lord," they have too often to fall back on another excuse, and plead that these things cannot be carried out now, because the circumstances are all so changed. In the face of the perilous times of the last days, of which Paul warned Timothy, the aged saint reminded the younger disciple of what a resource God has given His people in the Scriptures. "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" (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17). But we have not only the Word of God, but God Himself. "I commend you to God, and the Word of His grace," was Paul's word to those Ephesian elders, in view of all the dangers from without and within that he had just foretold. Not a teaching authority, vested in a separated caste, and assuming to be "the Church," but the Holy Spirit dwelling in each believer. "These things have I written unto you, concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him" (1 John ii. 26, 27). Thus wrote the beloved disciple to those whom he loved to address as "my little children." The other apostles had all departed to be with the

Lord, the many antichrists were already in the world; but the "other Comforter," whom the Lord had promised to His disciples, had come, and He is the interpreting power, while the Scriptures are the authoritative teaching of God. True, there is to be ministry of the word, for the edifying of the body of Christ, but this is not by a privileged class. In another number, we may profitably look at what the Scriptures teach us about such ministry in connection with the above quoted truth, as to the Spirit indwelling each believer.

—:o:—

"LET us hold fast grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

THE FEAR OF GOD.—The fear of God should be the habit of our mind, it should temper our joys and our sorrows too—"Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long." How many things do we meddle with, that bring misery upon us for want of this holy fear! Does not the fear of God drive away every other fear?

CONFESSIO N.

II.

WE find another example of unreal confession in the history of King Saul. He had disobeyed the plain commandment of God, in sparing Agag, the king of the Amalekites, and the best of the sheep and the oxen. When Samuel was sent to tell him of his sin, he sought to justify himself, and made a variety of excuses. At last, however, he could no longer withstand the solemn words of God's servant, and he cried out, "I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared the people and obeyed their voice" (1 Sam. xv. 24). But if, at the first, the fear of the people had more weight with him than the commandment of the Lord, the desire to stand well before the people was still the uppermost thought in his heart. "I have sinned," he says in verse 30, "yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people,

and before Israel." Perhaps we do not use exactly Saul's words, but how often they would but too fitly express the real thought of our hearts. Many a time the words of confession are spoken, more in the hope of avoiding exposure than with any other motive. How utterly unlike the cry of a heart that really mourns over sin, because the hatefulness of it to God has been discerned. Listen to David's broken-hearted confession: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight; that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest" (Psa. li. 4). He had no thought of saving himself from reproach; on the contrary, he only wished that all the reproach might fall upon himself, and none upon the Lord. Nathan had told him, just before, that God would judge him and put him to shame "before all Israel, and before the sun." And David bowed before the word of God, and did not ask to have it changed. He had "a broken and a contrite

heart," and a broken and contrite heart does not seek to cloak over sin, and get honour before the people. When the Spirit of God deals with the unsaved, the first thing He does is to convince of sin; and as soon as the sinner takes his true place, he finds that God is prepared to meet him in grace. "He looketh upon men; and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going down into the pit, and his life shall see the light" (Job xxxiii. 27, 28). It is exactly the same in all our departures from God since we were His children. God is abundantly able and willing to forgive and to restore; but we must know and confess the truth about our sin before we can have fellowship with Him again. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth" (1 John i. 5, 6). To cover up sin, to make excuses for it, to justify ourselves in regard to it;

all these are to walk in darkness, and consequently make fellowship with God impossible. One thing that always accompanies forgiveness, is a spirit set free from guile. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile" (Psa. xxxii. 1, 2). This was David's acknowledgment after a long and bitter experience of trying to get on without confession. "When I kept silence," he says, "my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long" (ver. 3). He tried to persuade himself that he was not so very bad; he would have liked to forget the past, and put himself right with God by doing better for the future. But that sort of thing never succeeds. Thank God that it does not. God never leaves old scores unsettled to patch up a sham peace, either with the sinner or with His own children. But we are very slow to learn this. A believer falls into some sin, and, being spoken to concerning it, is

too proud to acknowledge that it is sin. He is warned that there can be no fellowship with God while he persists in justifying himself; but he declares that he is in communion with God, and he is determined to prove it. He tries his utmost to behave as though he were walking happily with God, and gives himself diligently to all sorts of good works; but, in reality, he is fighting against God all the time, and the burden he is carrying grows daily more and more insupportable. How patiently God deals with His stubborn child; but God must break down the stubbornness, or the child can never again know the joy of communion. So God uses various means. He appeals to the heart and conscience by His word; He sends afflictions and troubles; till at last the vain struggle ends, and the pent-up agony of the heart all finds vent in the simple words, "I have sinned." Now God is able once again to manifest His grace and power in healing and restoring. His past dealings are all understood now;

for everything becomes clear when the mind is no longer blinded by its own obstinacy. "If they shall confess their iniquity, . . . and that they also have walked contrary unto Me; *and that I also have walked contrary unto them*, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity; then will I remember My covenant" (Lev. xxvi. 40-42). This was God's word to Israel, while they were yet in the wilderness, as He foretold them of all that He would bring upon them, if they turned aside from His commandments. But when the time came that they were captives in Babylon, they were far more ready to listen to false prophets, who promised them speedy deliverance, than to Jeremiah, who showed them how God was fulfilling His own solemn word of judgment. An honest whole-hearted confession puts us in our true place, and makes room for God and His grace. And who ever made room for God, and found Him wanting?

**"BETWEEN THEE AND HIM
ALONE."**

Matthew xviii. 15.

IN everything the Lord teaches us by example, as well as by precept; and in this matter of dealing with a brother who has trespassed against us, the example is not wanting. In Luke xxiv. 33, we read that the eleven were gathered together, and other disciples with them, on the evening of the resurrection day; while verse 36 tells us that, as they were speaking together, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them. Peter was one of the assembled company; Peter who, only three days before, had denied the Lord with oaths and curses. But this was not the first time Peter had seen the Lord that day. When the two disciples came hurrying back from Emmaus, bringing the joyful tidings of their interview with the risen One, they found that others had seen Him besides themselves. "The Lord is risen indeed, *and hath appeared unto Simon,*" were the first words that

greeted their ears, as they entered the upper room. "Hath appeared unto Simon." We have no record of what took place at that interview, for it was all between their two selves alone. Peter and John had run together to the sepulchre in the early morning, when first they heard that the stone had been rolled away and the grave was empty. The Lord did not show Himself then, however, for He must needs see Peter alone, before He meets him in company with any other. But though He did not appear to Peter in the morning, He had instructed His angel to send a message to him by the women, "Go your way, tell His disciples, and Peter, that He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you" (Mark xvi. 7). What a perfect pattern all this affords us of how we are to behave, when a fellow-disciple has trespassed against us. The Lord would not even wait till the opportunity came to see Peter, but sends this reassuring word in advance, to counteract any sugges-

tion of Satan that after such sin as his, he must not any longer hope to be counted among the disciples of the Lord. As we remarked before, we have not a hint of what passed between the Lord and His broken-hearted disciple at their first interview. He who had said, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone," acted upon the same gracious principle Himself. But though we do not know what words were spoken, we do know what the result was. The Lord had gained His disciple. Gained him doubly, gained him to be more than he had ever been before. "When thou art converted (that is, turned round from thy self-confidence to rely only on Me), strengthen thy brethren;" had been the Lord's words to Peter, when He was warning him of his approaching fall. And now these words were to have their accomplishment, and Peter, instead of boasting himself over his brethren, should be a strengthener of them. This was what had been in the

Lord's heart concerning Peter, and as a consequence, He had not neglected to pray for him. In close connection with the instructions about going to see the offending brother, is the special promise, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father, which is in heaven." For if God bids us seek the restoration of our erring brethren, He means us to set about it in faith and with prayer. So the blessed Lord, who saw the beginning of backsliding in Peter's heart, could say, "I have prayed for thee" (Luke xxii. 32). The Lord had received Peter as one whom the Father had given to Him, He had shed His own precious blood for Peter, and Peter was unspeakably precious to Him. What do we do, if one that we love is in imminent danger? How do we feel, if such a one is grievously hurt? We want to cultivate the remembrance of how precious each blood-bought one is to God, so that that may become the spring of all our behaviour to fellow saints. Self love will make me ready to avenge myself; but the love of God, filling my heart, will send me forth to gain my brother.

GOSPEL WORK.

Notes of an Address.

I WOULD ask your attention to two or three scriptures with reference to Gospel work.

Turn first to Philip. i. 27, "Only let your conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ: that, whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in *one* spirit, with *one* mind, striving *together* for the faith of the Gospel." Notice here that the Gospel work is not regarded as the work of any one individual, but the responsibility is laid upon *all* God's children to go in *together* for the faith of the Gospel. The first thing that the Apostle mentions here is, "Only let your conversation (or behaviour) be as becometh the Gospel." This is a most important point in connection with Gospel work. Let us remember this, that each one of us, by his conduct, is either hindering or helping on the Lord's work; we are either the means of leading sinners to Christ, or we are stumbling blocks to them. Let us ask ourselves this question, Is our behaviour before the world such as becometh the Gospel of Christ? We are either using our

influence to stir up and encourage the Lord's people in His work, or to hinder, discourage, and slacken the hands of those who are labouring in the Gospel. Beloved, let us seek continually to walk in fellowship with God; to abide in the light of His presence; this alone will keep us right in His service. "Striving together." God's purpose is to gather together in one all things in Christ—to bring all into a blessed unity with the Father and Son, through the Holy Ghost. In the carrying on of His work, God would have all His people to be striving together. It was so in the building of the Tabernacle in the wilderness; each one did the part allotted to him, and they all wrought together. They all had one object before them, and one pattern to go by. Although there was infinite variety of work and workers, they all wrought together and in fellowship with each other. In the Lord's service He would have us to work heartily together. It is said of the men of Zebulun, who, with the other tribes came with a perfect heart to make David king, that they could keep rank; also, that they were not of a double heart (1 Chr. xii. 33-38). In our service to the Lord in the Gospel,

our primary object should not be to see souls saved, although that is indeed a blessed and glorious object to have before us; but in all our service our chief object should be to exalt the Lord Jesus, and to bow with reverent subjection to His word. If this be the motive that actuates us, and the principle which guides us, then, whenever we hear of blessing in the Gospel, we shall rejoice, and we shall also be found working with God and doing our part in helping to gather in His chosen ones. Do not let us seek a prominent place in the Lord's service, but rather let us seek to be ready to do whatever work He sets before us, whether it be to preach the Gospel publicly or as opportunity is given us; in a quiet and humble way to point an anxious soul to Christ, or to minister the consolations of the Gospel to a weary sin-burdened sinner. It gives joy to God to see poor broken-hearted sinners trusting on His Son. Christ is glorified when such come to Him in all their defilement and guilt and rest in Him. Thus He sees of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied. That which the Spirit of God marks specially in the 15th of Luke is the joy of the Shepherd and the Father's joy; not

merely that the lost sheep was found and the prodigal brought home. The friends are but sharers of the joy of the Shepherd and of the Father. What we see *in these two parables, principally*, is the joy it gives to God when a poor lost one is found. We cannot share in the Father's joy if our hearts are not in fellowship with His. Let us ever remember that the effect of our Gospel testimony is not merely the conversion of sinners, but more, it puts the very joy of God into their hearts, and into the heart of every one who is in fellowship with Him. But it does something more than that; it exalts the Lord Jesus Christ, and brings eternal glory to Him. Turn now to 1 Thess. i. 3, "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." We have summed up here in a few words the character of the work that God wants. First it is a work of faith; that means that we have to do with God about it. Beloved, do you go to the Gospel meeting as a work of faith? If so, before you go to the meeting, you will have had dealings with God about it; and as you sit on your seat, your heart will be lifted up to the Lord in prayer for His blessing

on the word; and at the close of the Gospel address, you will be looking to Him to direct you to anxious ones, and to give you the word to suit them. It may be that the one who has been sitting next to you is unconverted; if so, then seek wisely and lovingly to deal with him about his soul. Many go to the Gospel meeting without any definite object before them. They go to it and leave it without any sense of responsibility before God toward the unsaved. Therefore many anxious sinners are allowed to leave the meeting without being spoken to by any of the Lord's people. Let us see then that we engage in the Lord's work in faith. Having purposed in our heart, before the Lord, to go to the Gospel meeting, let us leave our homes having this object before our hearts; and as we sit in the meeting, let us be looking up to the Lord to use us in some little way in leading sinners to Christ. If faith means that God is in it, love means that my heart is in it. You will accomplish nothing for God if it is not a labour of love. God wants heart work. He says, "Son, give ME thine heart." We have not got to say this to the unconverted, but we have to tell them that God has given up His

Son to the death of the cross, and thus He is commending His love to sinners. God says to those who have taken in His love, "Now, son, give Me thine heart." What God wants to see is heart-work; labour of love. If your heart is not in the work, then go to the Lord about it. Ask Him to stir up your heart. If your heart is not in the work that you profess to be doing for the Lord, then rest assured you are in a backsliding state of soul. Therefore, go at once to the Lord, and seek restoring grace. Get the joy of the Lord into your heart, and then your service to Him will be a labour of love. Having got right with the Lord, then seek to do His work in the Spirit. Be sure and keep at the special line of things the Lord has called you to. Go at the work and keep at it, in spite of opposition from the world, or the discouragement of fellow-Christians. And as you labour, let it be in the patience of hope, remembering that the Lord is coming to reward His servants. And O! how blessed it will be to hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Nothing but the grace of God will enable us to go on in the patience of hope. Are we prepared to deny ourselves, and

to give up our time and money for the work of the Lord, doing it as a work of faith, a labour of love, and, in the patience of hope, looking for our recompence when Jesus comes? Turn to Acts xiii. 44, "The next Sabbath-day came almost the whole city together, to hear the Word of the Lord." Here we have a lonely servant of the Lord, used by Him in getting the whole city of Antioch together to hear His Word. Brethren what we want is God; He is able to bring the people together. Let us look to Him alone in faith, when we commence Gospel work to draw the people to the meeting. Have we faith in Him for this? Whilst we trust to Him to bring the people to the meeting, let us also use, in faith, legitimate means to this end, such as visiting from house to house with a gospel book or intimation of the meetings, and giving the people a gracious and loving invitation to come. And when we have got the people together, then let us preach to them the simple Gospel, and expect that God will save souls. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Let us not trust either to the singing or to the servant of the Lord, however gifted he may be. God delights to

be honoured; therefore let us depend on Him to bless His own Word. Turn now to Acts xx. 20, 21, "I kept back nothing that was profitable, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying, both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." In Philip. iv. 3, the Apostle says, "Help those women which laboured with me in the Gospel." Paul does not say that these women preached publicly, but he says that they laboured with him. I have not the least doubt but these women who laboured with Paul went and spoke to the people in their houses. Brethren, this house to house visitation is an important work, and one that those who may not be fitted to preach publicly may take up. Beloved, what an honour it is to be used of God in any way in leading a soul to Christ! That is a privilege that we shall not have throughout eternity. Let us, therefore, seek from God the grace to serve Him in the Gospel. In our little measure, and by the help of our God, may we use well and wisely the opportunities given us during this little while, of pointing weary, burdened sinners to the Lamb of God who died on the Cross. The Lord enable us to be faithful as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

"NOT I, BUT CHRIST."

(Galatians ii. 20.)

HOW blessed it is as God's children always to take the low place, and be hid, as it were, behind the Cross; so that Christ may be all, and in all, and "in all things have the pre-eminence." It has been truly said that it is a sure test of a man's growth in grace, if Christ is increasing in him and he himself is decreasing. If a man is always talking about himself, you may know that he is making little spiritual progress, but if he is always occupied about Christ, and seeking to exalt Him, there can be little doubt about that man's growth. Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, says: "And the Lord make you to *increase* and abound in love, one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do towards you: to the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His

saints" (1 Thess. iii. 12-13). Oh, to be always in a state of soul to say like John the Baptist—"He must *increase*, but I must *decrease*." When we are small in our own eyes, realising our weakness and helplessness, and "have no confidence in the flesh," but have our eyes lifted up to the Lord "from whom cometh our help," then it is we know something of being "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might," and are led to say—"When I am weak, then am I strong." The mighty men of the eleventh of Hebrews, who wrought such victories for God, have it recorded concerning them, that out of *weakness* they were made *strong* (Heb. xi. 34). Jeremiah, when told by the Lord that he was ordained to be a prophet unto the nations, replied: "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child." (Jer. i. 6). But when he had thus taken a low place, the Lord could take him up and use him, so that in verse 9, we find the Lord saying to him: "Behold, I have put My

words in thy mouth." If we are to be used, like Jeremiah, as a mouth-piece for the Lord to speak through; or as a voice, like John the Baptist, bidding sinners to "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;" or as the clay in the hands of the Lord in opening blind eyes, and turning many from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, we must get self under our feet and have a part in Paul's desire that "Christ may be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or death" (Phil. i. 20).

"*For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*" (Phil. i. 21).

PRECIOUS Saviour! may I live
 Only for Thee.
 Use the powers that Thou dost give
 Only for Thee.
 Be my spirit's deep desire
 Only for Thee.
 May my intellect aspire
 Only for Thee.
 Meekly may I suffer grief
 Only for Thee.
 Gratefully accept relief
 Only for Thee.
 In my joys, may I rejoice
 Only for Thee.
 And in all things make my choice
 Only for Thee.

JULY, 1885.

THE BELIEVER'S PATHWAY.

111

M A R A H.

WHO would have thought that the joyful song of Israel by the Red Sea would be so soon followed by murmuring? Such, however, was the case (Ex. xv. 23-25). Their *circumstances* were unexpectedly trying, and their faith failed—they came to bitter water, which they could not drink. But there was help in God; and He delivered them, not by bringing them elsewhere, but by directing Moses to cast a *certain tree* into the water, and made it both palatable and sweet. May we learn from this to connect the Cross of our blessed Lord with ALL our trials; for we shall find, by contemplating His love, sufferings, and triumph, and by associating His almighty power, wisdom, and grace with our sorrows, that we shall not only be sustained and comforted, but realise also that that cross makes every bitter thing sweet.

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"EVERY JOINT."

"**Y**OU are all wrong," said a brother in the Lord to us one day; "God's way is to have churches under the care of pastors, and you will never succeed till you adopt that plan." The brother in question was connected with what is known as a training college, to prepare young men for "the ministry." We did not dispute his statement that God's plan is for the churches of His saints to be cared for by pastors. But underneath these sound and harmless words, he was seeking to justify the man-made plans, in which the ministry of the word of God in each congregation is kept in the hands of *one* official "pastor;" and that one, often enough, a complete novice, whom the word forbids to take part in

the oversight of the assembly. It is this loose way of general reference to Scripture to justify our own ways, without any care to see what God is really teaching us in His Word, that so sadly confuses the minds of God's children, and leads many to think that the Scriptures are scarcely a clear and sufficient guide. We referred the brother in question to 1 Peter v. 1-5 as giving God's plan in His own words (words that will not admit of two interpretations), and we would commend this same passage to the earnest attention of those who are seeking to know the mind of God as to this matter. It is well to point out that the article "the" should be left out before the word "elders," at the beginning of verse 1. In the original, it is simply "elders," showing that the apostle is ad-

dressing older ones first. It corresponds exactly with the expression in the 5th verse, "likewise, ye younger." Elder ones are to feed the flock, taking the oversight; younger ones are to be subject to the elder ones. But it is important to notice the words "among you" in both the first and second verses. In each assembly, the older brethren are to shepherd the flock. There is no room here for some outside authority to appoint a pastor over the assembly, or for the assembly to choose one for themselves. God commands the older ones to shepherd the flock, taking the oversight of it. And if they do this, there is an end of the ministerial office, for all its functions will be already fulfilled. If, in addition to the work of these elder brethren, there was still the place of *the* pastor or minister to be filled up by a special appointment or arrangement, why do we never hear of that individual in the New Testament scriptures? In Acts xx., Paul sent for the elders of the church at Ephesus (ver. 17).

In verse 28, he addresses them as having been made overseers over the flock by the Holy Ghost, and as responsible to shepherd it. Why had he not sent for "the minister" also? We suppose that even the stoutest defender of the clerical position will admit that it was because there was no such person. But if they had no regular minister, and only these brethren, whom Paul exhorted, among other things, to labour with their own hands (verses 33-35), were caring for the flock; why did not the apostle instruct them to make haste and get one, in order that they might be prepared for the difficulties and dangers that he warned them about? Again, those who uphold the clerical office have to admit that it is quite true that in those primitive times they had not attained to the present arrangement, of each flock under the care of its own official minister, trained and qualified elsewhere, and invited, as the chosen one of the congregation, or set over them by some outer authority. Then, after all,

we have no difference of interpretation of Scripture to deal with. The Scripture plan has failed. The Lord, who foresaw the grievous wolves attacking from outside, and the speakers of perverse things causing divisions within, and who had made His own provision for His saints, did not see forward far enough. That was all very well for those days, but altered circumstances now call for something quite different. How little God's children think, when they use such expressions, of the terrible dishonour they are putting on God and His Word. But it is well for us to see exactly what such statements really mean, so that we may not be turned aside by them. God's plan has for its foundation that God Himself is with His people. All the different inventions that man has sought out arise from forgetfulness, in greater or less degree, of this blessed foundation. When the apostle was about to write to the Corinthian saints about spiritual gifts and their exercise in the assembly, he reminded

them that, in the time of their Gentile heathenism, they were carried away to *dumb* idols, even as they might be led. The idol could say nothing, and those who worshipped it were therefore always liable to be deluded and deceived by the craft of the idol priests. But now, they had been brought to the living God; and all their dependence was to be upon Himself. "Lo, I am with you alway" (Matt. xxxviii. 20), is the all-sufficient reason why we should never think of seeking for new plans when circumstances alter. But then God's plan throws responsibility upon each individual. Naturally, we like to go and listen at our ease, and enjoy or criticize, as the case may be; and the plan of a service conducted by one or two responsible individuals will always be a popular one. But God has so compacted the body together, that every part has something to supply for the common edification; and it is only by the effectual working in the measure of every part that healthy growth is main-

tained (see Eph. iv. 15, 16). How often we have heard it said in large assemblies, where there were brethren of undoubted gift and ability, "There does not seem to be the same power with the word of God now, as when a few of us met together years ago, without any gifted ones among us." When the half-dozen first came together, each one of the little company had laid hold of the precious fact that the Lord Himself was in the midst. They came to remember Him, and they expected to receive from Himself what He saw that they needed. Not much was spoken, but we know that a very little, in the Lord's hands, can satisfy a multitude. Where the eyes and heart of each believer are really lifted up to the Lord, every hymn, each portion of Scripture, the few simple words spoken by one or another, all come straight from the Lord Himself, and there is no lack. But time passes on; brethren have more knowledge and a readier utterance; and, little by little, the saints have got into the habit of

expecting something from teachers rather than from God. Numbers have increased also; and many who have come in were drawn by the teaching they had heard, and have never been exercised as to their own responsibility in the matter. Hence the felt want of power. Teachers may teach well, but that cannot supply the place of "that which every joint supplieth." It is not that each saint is to have something to say; but the faith of each one should be laying hold of God, and then the unhindered supply would not fail to flow forth for the edification of all.

ACCEPTABLE SERVICE.

IN looking out for opportunities of doing great things in the Lord's cause, we lose the daily, hourly opportunities for little acts of self-denial, which especially require the grace of Christ. To be mortifying the deeds of the body, when no eye but that of God sees us, is the most acceptable service to our Lord and Master.

**“DIVERSITIES OF GIFTS,
BUT THE SAME SPIRIT.”**

(1 Cor. xii. 4.)

LAST month we suggested that it would be profitable to inquire as to what the Scriptures teach us about ministry, in connection with the all-important truth that the Holy Spirit dwells in each believer. When we are casting aside unscriptural views and practices about any matter, we are responsible to see that we ascertain and carry out that which is scriptural. In too many cases we have seen Christians withdrawing from some human system, and then stopping short; separating, in fact, the two commandments, “Cease to do evil” and “Learn to do well” (Isa. i. 16, 17). It is easy to see that the arrangement commonly carried out, by which an official person conducts all the worship, the exhortation and the ministry of the Word, is without any foundation in the Word of God. But what is to take its place? We would answer first of

all, “God Himself is to take its place.” As our hold upon God gets feeble, we cry out for more of human arrangement. In this way it was that, little by little, the simplicity of the early days of the Church was lost. At the first, the disciples were content to come together on the first day of the week to break bread. If some gifted teacher, such as the Apostle Paul, were present, there was full opportunity for him to instruct and exhort them. But that was not what brought them together, and there was no permanent arrangement for a special teacher every Lord’s-day, still less for one to conduct an entire service. The disciples gathered around the Lord, and they knew that He was in the midst. Was not that enough? Surely it was, and surely it ought to be now. When we see a little handful of saints assembled together, without any gifted one to speak to them, we sometimes think that their assembling thus, if in faith and not in form merely, is a blessed expression of the confi-

dence told out in the twenty-third Psalm, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." On the other hand, how sadly all the elaborate arrangements, that now-a-days take the place of the simple gathering of old, tell that "Jesus in the midst" is no longer the guarantee to the hearts of His people that there shall be no lack. Wherever the New Testament takes up this subject of ministry, it begins with God Himself as the source of it, the power and the controller of it all. In 1 Corinthians, chapters xii. and xiv., we have the fullest exposition of the matter which the Scriptures contain, and there the foundation is laid in these words: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations; but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal" (verses 4-7). This was addressed to saints who had previously been taught that the

believer's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in him (see chap. vi. 19). In the same way, in the epistle to the Ephesians, chap. 1 tells them, that they have been sealed with the Holy Spirit, the earnest of the inheritance (ver. 13); while chap. iv., when taking up the question of ministry, lays the foundation of one Spirit, one Lord, one God and Father of all, with grace given to each saint according to the measure of the gift of Christ (verses 4-7). If then, we give up arranging for a specially qualified and trained man to conduct the prayers, praises, and ministry, let us remember that we are not simply to have many men instead of one man. We hear a great deal of objection to "one-man-ministry," but many-men-ministry is not one whit better in itself. One-man-ministry is the outcome of unbelief; and, in place of it, we want a simple trust in the Lord Himself, that will always leave Him room to work by His own Spirit, in His own way. And this trust, this exercise of faith in God,

is not to be only on the part of those who minister the Word. In the human body, the proper action of the individual member depends largely on the healthy condition of the whole. So in the assemblies of God's saints, it is "according to the effectual working in the measure of every part" (Eph. iv. 16) that the whole body is edified. The Spirit is the worker, and if I am grieving the Spirit in my daily walk, I am hindering the edification of the saints when we assemble together. If this were more realized, should we not seek to judge ourselves, when there was unprofitable ministry, instead of merely finding fault with the speaker? Of course there is another side to the subject. There is not merely the "holding the head," the "growing up into Him" of all the members. There is also the individual responsibility of each one for the particular gift bestowed upon him. The teacher, the exhorter, the overseer, the servant in whatever capacity he might serve the Church, are all responsible to wait on their

ministry, and to be diligent in the exercise of it (see Rom. xii. 5-8). But the gift of one is never to be used to the shutting out of others; for the "increase of God" goes on in the body, when all the joints and bands are supplying that which each one receives from the Head.

LIVING BY CHRIST, AND LIVING TO CHRIST.

"As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me" (John vi. 57).
"He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again" (2 Cor. v. 15).

IN the above Scriptures we shall notice the two expressions, living by Christ, and living to Christ. The Lord Jesus said that He lived by the Father, and, therefore, He lived to the Father. Many of us, alas, know what it is to try to live *to* Christ, apart from living *by* Christ; but the one is impossible without the other. Our first act of

faith was to eat the Bread of Life : to feed by faith on the Son of God. We heard His word and received it; that word which testified of Jesus as the Saviour of sinners. The moment we believed the Gospel, we received the gift of eternal life, and the forgiveness of our sins; we received Christ and knew Him to be ours, and our hearts were satisfied with Him. God calls us to go on in the same way that we began. We began by living by Christ. As dead sinners we needed life, and as guilty sinners we needed pardon, and the moment we believed on Him, we received life and pardon. We needed instruction and guidance, and when by faith we looked to Him, He taught, instructed, and led us by His Word and Spirit. God has put us in the place of dependence; He calls us to trust Him, and live by Him. He says, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me" (John xv. 4). Wherever we may be placed, and whatever we may be doing, we need Christ.

We need Christ with us all the day long. In the morning when we get up out of bed, when we go about our business, and at the close of the day; having daily intercourse and dealings with Him. We need Christ with us in our business, in the family, and in our testimony before the world. The Lord says, "Without Me ye can do nothing." Just as our bodies are sustained by eating our daily bread, even so our souls are strengthened by feeding on the Bread of Life. Just as Christ lived by His Father, was never out of His presence, and hid His word in His heart, and brought it to bear upon every circumstance of every-day life, in like manner we are to feed on the sincere milk of the Word, in communion with our Father. If we are not living by Christ, we shall be utterly unable to resist the devil, the world, and the flesh. Our thanksgivings will not be going up to Him at every turn of our journey. We shall not be giving joy to God in our daily life. We may go on with an outward profession, passing for good

Christians before men, while, at the same time we are not living to God. God grant that all our hearts may be stirred up to live by faith on the Son of God, and manifest in our mortal bodies the very life of Christ. Let us put this question to each of our hearts. Are we as children of God, living by Him, and living to Him? Are we seeking His glory in all we put our hand to? If not, let us at once humble ourselves before the Lord in confession, and then seek His grace indeed to live by Him, and to Him.

PATIENT WAITING.

THERE is such a thing as waiting on God, because we *have* to wait ; just as a child under restraint will be submissive by the mere force of circumstances. This is not true waiting on the Lord. Scriptural waiting is patient waiting, yea, even joyful waiting. The child of faith puts his matters into God's hand, and leaves them there, content to wait till the Lord's "set time" shall come. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him" (Psa. xxxvii. 7).

UNTIL HE COME.

KEEP looking, just looking to Jesus,
Away from thy burden of sin ;
Away from the turmoil around
thee,

Away from the conflicts within.

Keep looking, just looking to Jesus !

Keep walking, just walking with Jesus,
Throughout every hour of the day ;
Content to be led where He leads thee,
Along by His own chosen way.

Keep walking, just walking with Jesus !

Keep living, just living for Jesus,
Thy Master, Redeemer, and Lord ;
Knowing none save the will of thy Father,
And guided alone by His word.

Keep living, just living for Jesus !

Keep working, just working for Jesus,
Soon, soon will thy labours be o'er ;
And then will the Lord of the harvest
Bid each reaper rest evermore.

Keep working, just working for Jesus !

Keep trusting, just trusting to Jesus,
Thou knowest He never will fail ;
The faith that is stayed on Jehovah,
Through all, in the end, must prevail.

Keep trusting, just trusting to Jesus !

Keep watching, just watching for Jesus,
He tells thee His coming is near ;
Perchance, ere to-day's light has faded,
The home-call may sound in thine ear,
And then 'twill be ever "*with Jesus!*"

GLENVAR.

“LET US EAT AND
BE MERRY.”

(Luke xv. 23.)

HERE was more likeness between the two sons in the fifteenth chapter of Luke, than perhaps appears at first sight. True, the younger son left his father's house to go to the far country, where he wasted his substance in riotous living; while the elder one stayed at home, and was diligent in all outward obedience to his father's commandments. Yet, notwithstanding this great apparent difference, the story gives us a clue to their hearts' motives, which reveals the same power as prompting them both. With the younger son, it is all plain enough. “Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me,” he says. And he has scarcely received it, when he gathers all together and betakes himself to the far country. His enjoyments were such as could find no place in his father's house; and the further he gets from home, the happier he imagines that he will be.


But what do we find like this in the elder brother? He never went to the far country, he never indulged in riotous living. All quite true, but the testing-day was coming, which would manifest how much or how little of real love there was underneath his outward good conduct. That testing-day was the day of the younger brother's return home. To the father it was a day of unspeakable joy. “This, my son, was dead and is alive again,” he says; and he calls on all the house to rejoice with him. But, strange to say, the very thing that filled the heart of the father with joy, fills the bosom of the elder son with discontent and anger. The explanation is to be found in the words of the elder brother himself. “Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid that I might *make merry with my friends.*” This then was the object that he had set before his mind; it was for this that he had served so diligently. He had *his own* friends, and his own

thoughts of merry-making, quite apart from his father. He had hoped after years of service to have a portion to himself, and to enjoy it in his own way. It was to be all very respectable, no riotous living about it; but his father had no part in it all. We have three merry-makings in this narrative. One is the riotous living of the younger son in the far country; another is the kid and the party of select friends of the elder brother. There was no place for the father in either of these, and that is what stamps the same character upon them both. But, besides these, we have the father's merry-making over his lost son found again, and this should have been the uniting point for all. The younger brother had now been drawn from all his former delights, to find his joy in accepting all that his father's grace loved to bestow. He no longer hankers after the far country, nor has he another word to say about being a hired servant. He is his father's son; once lost, now saved; once dead, now alive again. And why cannot the elder

brother rejoice also? Just because his heart is as far off from his father, as ever the younger brother's was, when in the midst of his riotous living. He had never wept with his father over the far-off prodigal; he had not run out with his father to meet that prodigal on his return. And when the father said, "let us eat and be merry," there was no response in the elder brother's heart. Children of God, are God's pleasures our pleasures? Can we take our part in God's merry-making? If not, it is surely because we are indulging in, or, at least, longing for pleasures in which God has no part. Very harmless they may appear, but is there room for God in them? Books, friends, occupations, amusements, or whatever it may be. Nobody finds fault with them; they are not like the riotous living in the far country; but, if they are like the kid and the party of friends, the effect will be just the same. Our heart will be out of sympathy with God, and we shall have no care for seeking after the lost, or helping the feeble ones of the flock, or anything else that adds to the joy of the feast table in the father's house.

THE WILL OF GOD.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS.

“AUSE me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto Thee. . . . Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God” (Psa. cxliii. 8, 10). David knows that he cannot do the will of God, but by the Spirit's power and grace. Whether in the Old or New Testament, we find the teaching is the same. David, in Psa. li. 12, says, “Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and *uphold me with Thy free Spirit.*” What we need, day by day, is the upholding of God's free good Spirit; the Spirit freely given to us, because given on the ground of the blood of Christ.

Let us look further into the Scripture, concerning the will of God. In John iv. 34, Jesus says, “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me.” We often hear that verse quoted in this way—“My meat and My drink is to do the will of Him that sent Me.” That is not correct, and does not convey the mind of God. Drink refreshes, but meat strengthens. Whilst the disciples were gone to the city to buy bread, the Lord had been serving His Father in minis-

tering to the need of a poor sinner. When they returned, they marvelled that He talked with the woman, and “His disciples prayed Him, saying, Master, eat; and He said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.” “As long as I am doing the will of My Father, I can count upon His grace to sustain Me.” Don't you see that that which strengthens Me is the conviction and assurance that I am doing the will of My Father. Could the Apostle Paul have gone on in his path of service to Christ, which brought him into danger, suffering and privation; which brought upon him the hatred and malice of the enemies of the cross, if he had not had the conviction, that he was doing the will of God, and therefore could depend on his Father to sustain him? His strength was, that the work he was doing was by the will of God.

Turn to another passage in John v. 30, “I can of Mine own self do nothing; as I hear I judge, and My judgment is just, because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me.” Notice, that here, it is not as in the previous Scripture—the meat that sustained Him; but here He says, “My judgment is just.” Why? Because He sought not His own will, but the will

of His Father. If we are not willing to do God's will, the result of it will be, that our judgment will be perverted. The Lord meant by these words, that He had an unbiassed judgment ; that He walked in the light of His Father's countenance, and in His light He saw light clearly. "He that is spiritual, judgeth all things." The man that is not willing to bow to the will of God when he sees it, has a carnal mind and a *perverted judgment*, and therefore is not capable of forming a sound judgment in the things of God.

Turn with me to another Scripture, John vi. 37, 38—"All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me ; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out, for I came down from heaven not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." I think this is a most precious verse ; the meaning of it is this :—"All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me ; ye may gnash your teeth and hate Me, and seek by all means to keep them from coming to Me, but the Father has given Me these, and they shall come to Me in spite of your opposition." He sees one coming to Him, and He says, "This is one that the Father has given Me, and I will never surrender or give him up."

"And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." His determination to fulfil the Father's will is my certainty, that in that last day, I shall stand in glory with Him. Were He to fail in this, He would fail to accomplish the Father's will.

Turn to another Scripture. "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 vi. 17). The principle in this is, that if any man be willing to do His will, he will know of the doctrine. It is no use for a man to talk of knowing the will of God, if he be not willing to do it. If any man be willing to do His will, God will give him to know what His will is. The stout-hearted are far from righteousness. God never teaches His way to any but the meek. "The meek will He guide in judgment, the meek will He teach His way." "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart ; and saveth such as are of a contrite spirit" (Psa. xxxiv. 18). If we have not that condition of soul, let us ask God to give it to us. In God's assembly, the will of God can only be carried out by those who are broken-

hearted; not by the stout-hearted. I could name you place after place, where rule has been carried out in the flesh by the stout-hearted, in unbrokenness of spirit, and such rule has been arrogantly set forth as God's rule. Oh, the hatefulness and mockery and sham of carrying out in God's name, a thing called rule and discipline, which is done in the flesh, not in the fear of the Lord. We need broken hearts before God, and then He will teach us His way. If there be any differences of judgment, lack of oneness of mind in our assemblies, then let there be waiting before God: He says, "If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you."

Turn to 1 Peter ii. 15. "For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." Foolish men are continually talking against God's way. God's way has always been spoken against by the ignorant. How am I to put to silence the ignorance of the foolish? By well-doing. It is a curious word that is here rendered—"*put to silence*;" it is the same as in 1 Cor. ix. 9, "Thou shalt not *muzzle* the ox," and might be read, "That with well-doing, ye may muzzle the ignorance of foolish

men." How are we to shut the mouths of people who are constantly talking against Christians, and particularly against those who preach the Gospel, calling them hypocrites? How are we to put a muzzle on them? *By well-doing*. Are we known as the best living people in the place where we live? If we are not, then we are opening the mouths of the enemies of God and His truth, and giving them occasion to blaspheme.

O, what a responsibility is upon us! We are either by our ways, opening the mouths of the ungodly against God and His truth, or we are, by well-doing, putting them to silence. May God teach us what His will is, and when we know what His will is, may we seek grace of Him to do it. "It is better if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing" (1 Peter iii. 17). It is easy to suffer for well-doing, if we suffer in communion with God. The sharpest suffering that the people of God have had to pass through, is that brought upon themselves through their own self-will and disobedience. But even then, when we turn to the Lord and confess our sin, we have His unfailing grace to fall back upon. When we get into trouble through our own disobedience, Satan is ever

ready to insinuate the lie into our hearts, that now that we have brought ourselves into trouble, we need not expect God to do anything for us. The Lord will, in His mercy, undertake for the deliverance of His people, if they cry to Him (see 2 Chron. xviii. 31, and Psa. cvii).

STRANGERS HERE.

LET us never forget this, that we are only pilgrims and strangers here. This world is not our home. Our citizenship is in heaven. Whenever this great truth is forgotten, we forget what manner of people we are, and, before we are aware of it, we find ourselves pressing eagerly forward for some coveted prize of earth. The heavenly citizenship is forgotten; and, alas! too often the next step is to deny it altogether. A position in the world or in society is looked upon as something to be grasped at. Dignity and reputation must be preserved at any cost. How empty would all this appear, if we just lived in the power of our holy separation—our heavenly citizenship! Christ “made Himself of no reputation.” Let this mind be also found in you.

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"YE ARE NOT YOUR OWN."

(1 Cor. vi. 19).

WHEN one man owns a house, and another lives in it, each of the two may say of it, "That is *my* house." The first has bought it and holds the title deeds, and he calls it *his* house on the ground of ownership. But the second has a very distinct claim on the house, though on quite different grounds to the first. He lives in the house, and till his tenancy comes to an end, he claims to enjoy the entire use of it all. As tenant, therefore, the second man also calls it *his* house. The one, as owner, receives the rent or gain earned by the house, while the other, as occupier, enjoys the house itself. But when the same person is both owner and occupier, there is no one to divide his claim upon

it. The house is altogether his own, for it is his property and he dwells in it. Now it is just this double claim that God makes upon the believer's body. "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you" (1 Cor. vi. 19). As the one who has chosen my body for His dwelling place, God claims that it shall be kept entirely for Himself. But He adds a further and even a stronger reason. He is owner as well as occupier. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price." First, redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, and next, indwelt by the Holy Spirit; what irresistible force this gives to the exhortation, "Wherefore glorify God in your body."* But where-

* The words, "and in your spirit, which are God's," should not be there (see Revised Version); the subject being how God has sanctified the believer's body for His own use.

ever God puts in a claim upon us, He always admits that we have a corresponding claim upon Him. Perhaps you may have sometimes seen a delapidated-looking house, that had stood empty for many years. The windows were broken, the roof was leaking, the paint had peeled off the doors, and the whole building seemed going to decay. It was easy to be seen that the house was without a tenant; but that of itself would not account for its neglected condition. Why does not the owner at least keep it in repair? The answer is a very simple one. It has not got an owner. The title to the property is in dispute, and the building is rapidly going to ruin. But at last the Court of Chancery has settled the title and sold the property. Now there is some one who says, "That is my house." And what is the consequence? Why, that very speedily, we see signs that some one is interested in it. A whole army of workmen take it in hand. Windows are mended, broken slates replaced by sound

ones, the wood work is all painted, and the place once more becomes tenantable. That is the result of its getting an owner, for the owner is concerned in maintaining his property in good condition. But presently we see a further change. The owner has decided to live in the house he has bought; and now, it must not only be put into sound condition, but it must be beautified and furnished. When at last all is ready, what a transformation it is. And all this came about because the ownerless, tenantless dwelling had found one who could say of it, "This is *my* house. I have bought it, and I have come to live in it." So the fact that God has redeemed us and dwells in us, assures us that He will not fail to take care of His own property, and to beautify the house in which He has taken up His abode. But here the illustration stops short. The house that is built of brick and stone cannot take pleasure in or respond to the care of its owner; while, on the other hand, God calls us to fellowship with Himself in the carrying

out of His own purposes. We are to put away from us every thing that is unfitting God's dwelling-place; while, as the elect of God, we are to put on all that is God-like, and therefore pleasing to Him. We are to work out our own salvation, because God works in us. "You are mine," He says to each redeemed one, "I have bought you, and I have come to dwell in you." And, as our hearts take in the precious truth, we own that we are responsible to glorify Him in our body; and we also learn that He has made Himself responsible to empower us to do the very thing He claims from us.

"ALL THINGS ARE YOURS."

(1 Cor. iii. 21.)

WE have just been dwelling upon the fact, that to every blood-bought soul, God says, "Ye are not your own." And here is another precious declaration to put alongside of the first, "All things are yours." But

we can only know the preciousness of the second of these two statements, in proportion as we are brought under the power of the first. They are two of the distinguishing marks that show us the difference between a son and a hired servant. The servant makes his own bargain with the master. He works so many hours a day for so much wages. If he is dissatisfied with his place, he is free to give notice, and seek employment elsewhere. But, on the other hand, he has no claim upon anything that belongs to his master; and when he has drawn his wages, he has nothing more to expect. How different with the son. He did not choose his own sphere of service, and he has no power to alter it. He has been brought up under subjection to his father, a subjection far more complete than anything that his father can exercise over hired servants. But then look at the other side. He lives in his father's house, sits at his father's table, and has a share in all that belongs to his father: and,

best of all, nothing can change the blessed relationship under which he enjoys so many privileges. The whole thing seems summed up in the words, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." But it needs a filial spirit to be able to enjoy a son's portion. When the Lord Jesus had emptied Himself of His own power and majesty, that, as Son of God, He might do His Father's will on earth, perfect dependence and perfect subjection were the characteristic marks that distinguished all His walk down here. He trusted God implicitly, and, therefore, He obeyed Him perfectly. We are often told, and rightly so, that Mark's gospel presents the Lord Jesus to us as the servant of God. Yet this very gospel begins with the words, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the SON of God." But there is no contradiction here, for His service was just the service that only a son can render; and Mark's gospel shows us how a son can serve, who ever hears his father saying to him,

"All that I have is thine." In Luke xv., the grace of the father's heart showed itself in those words to his elder son. But there was nothing corresponding to this in the son's heart, and hence his grumbling spirit. How different with the Lord Jesus. The infinite contentment of His soul comes out in the words, "He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him" (John viii. 29). To Him it was meat and drink to do the will of His Father; and, consequently, He never failed to enjoy the fellowship of His Father's presence. "All things are yours" tells us how abundantly God has provided for us, and claims all our trust. "Ye are not your own" tells at what a cost He has purchased us, and claims all our obedience.

—:o:—

HUMILITY helps us to know our pride; and if we would have the "rest" that is for the lowly, we must tread under foot our pride.

**“UNTIL CHRIST BE FORMED
IN YOU.”**

—
(Gal. iv. 19.)
—

THE purpose of God concerning each believer is, that we should be “conformed to the image of His Son.” With this purpose in His heart, God gave His Son to die for us, and the cross assures us therefore that God will spare no pains for the accomplishment of His purpose. Now does not this throw a light upon what God seeks in us now? We are too apt to think that God is chiefly concerned about our service and its results. But it is ourselves that God is concerned with. If an employer has a lot of workmen, he expects to make a profit on the labour of each one. He only engages them with that object, and when he can no longer profitably employ them, he loses no time in dismissing them. But it is just the reverse of this between a father and his child. And the foundation of all the difference lies in the simple

fact that the child belongs to him; it is his own. Hence the father is not thinking of what he can gain by the child, but of what the child itself shall be. He has his own thought in his heart of what he would like his child to grow up to, and he is willing to spend time and money and care in training and instructing his child with that end in view. He is abundantly rewarded at last, when the child has developed into a man, worthy of all the care that had been bestowed upon him. And meanwhile, what does the father desire in his boy, but the ready submission to his father's will in all things, that filial affection alone can render. “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John iii. 1). And because that is our name, therefore our Father is not counting the profit He can make by us, but is occupying Himself with training and teaching and disciplining us for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. This being so, it is plain that, on

our part, our great concern should be to please Him, by readily submitting to His will in all things. The hired servant frets when he thinks his work is not profitable to his master, for he fears he will soon be dismissed. He is in trouble when sickness keeps him from his employment, for he expects his place will have been filled up and there will be no room for him when he is ready to return. And we have so much of the hired servant about us still. We are so slow to understand the grace of God, and to perceive that He did not leave off bestowing His gifts upon us when we received salvation at His hands. It was then that we first made room for His gifts, and it is His delight evermore to go on giving for the supply of all our need, and for the accomplishment of all His purpose in us. Perhaps He has put me in a place where I have much daily drudgery, about which I am inclined to say "What good can there be in this? Why am I not permitted to have more opportunities for doing good?"

What then is the good that I want to do? Fancy a child telling its father that it cannot go on with the task that he has appointed it, because it wants to be doing something more useful. Are we content with God's purpose concerning us? Then surely we may be content with His way of carrying it out. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul," wrote the Psalmist (Psa. cxvi. 7). He had been in deep trouble; he had been perplexed and had spoken hastily; he had almost forgotten God's unchanging faithfulness. But now it has all come back to him, and what can he render to the Lord for all His benefits? Why, just once again, to take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. This is the soul's rest. He doeth all things well, and all things work together for good to them that love Him, and are called according to His purpose.

—:o:—

THE heavenly pilgrim shall ever have a light for his path, although he may not ever have an unclouded sky.

THE EXCEEDING RICHES OF GOD'S GRACE.

(Notes of an Address on Eph. ii. 1-7.)

I WISH to speak for a little this afternoon on the subject of the grace of God. It is one that concerns us all, and which may be easily comprehended even by the youngest believer; so that, if there are those here who have been converted only lately, they may understand and profit by it. I am sure that what will help the youngest believer here, will not come amiss to the oldest.

Look with me at Eph. ii. 7: "That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us by Christ Jesus." It is most beautiful to see how the character of God is brought out in the names that the Holy Spirit has given to Him in the Scriptures. In the New Testament, He is called "the God of all grace," "the God of glory," "the God of hope," "the God of peace," "the God of love," "the God of patience," "the God of all comfort." Oh! what a beautiful character is thus revealed. If I want to see these various aspects of the character of God manifested, where am I to look? All are shown forth

in the person of Jesus Christ, God's beloved Son. There I find the whole character of God brought into a focus. Hence He is called "the brightness of God's glory," or, as it might be rendered, "the out-shining of His glory." It is in Christ alone that we see the glory of God (2 Cor. iv. 6). We never could have beheld His glory, or known His character, if it had not pleased God to reveal Himself to us in His Son, who is "the express image of His person" (Heb. i. 3). It is as if I showed you a photograph of a friend, and said, "That's just his living image; you see in that a perfect picture of him, and when you see him, you will know him." So Jesus said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9).

As we see the Son of God going steadfastly, step by step, along that difficult, trying, and agonising path to Calvary's cross, and there enduring the wrath of God for us, bowing His head in death, and saying ere He died, "It is finished!" we see God manifest in the flesh. We see in Him the God of all grace, patience, and consolation; the God of all grace providing, through the shedding of the blood of His Son, salvation for even the chief of sinners; making

peace for those who were rebels against Him. It is thus that we see in Christ the character of God revealed.

I wish to dwell at this time upon God's character as "the God of all grace." I believe this to be the aspect of His character that we need most to learn, and to be thoroughly grounded in, at the commencement of our Christian course; and not only then, but continually, in all the varied experience of our life.

We read in that 7th verse of Eph. ii. of God's purposes in "the *ages* to come." When God speaks of an age, He does not mean a few years; but, it may be, a thousand years, or perhaps two thousand, or even several thousand years. This present evil age has been running its course for nearly 1900 years, ever since Christ was crucified, and it is not yet ended. Yet there are people who try to make out "ages" to signify a comparatively short time. Do not let Satan deceive you in this. When God speaks of "ages to come," He is looking forward to an eternity that He only can fill. In Eph. iii. 21, we read these words: "Unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end." That is another way of speaking of the same thing as in Eph. ii. 7. In "the


ages to come," God is going to be glorified in the Church by Christ Jesus. When God sent His Son into the world, "that we might live through Him," it was that we might live *throughout God's eternal ages*. What a glorious thing it is that the life begotten in the soul, feeble though it may be—just a sigh of relief as the sinner gets a sight of his sins put away—is the beginning of the life that he is to enjoy with God and Christ throughout eternal ages, world without end. Mark, nothing short of this would satisfy you or me. God has so constituted us that nothing short of *eternity* can satisfy us. Would it satisfy us to be told that God in His grace had given us a life that would last for ten thousand years? "Well," you would say, "that is a long time," and you would begin and count it up. After a thousand years had gone, you would say, "A tenth part of my happy life has gone, but I have still nine thousand years to live." By-and-by, the second thousand years having gone, you would say, "I have eight thousand years still to live." And as one thousand years after another was passing on, you would be looking forward to the termination of your appointed time of bliss. That could

never satisfy us. Nothing but eternal life with God could satisfy our souls. God is eternal : Jesus Christ is eternal : the Holy Spirit is eternal, and He has given us eternal life to spend in communion with Himself. That is what the grace of God has done for every believer. It is a marvellous thing that God, the infinitely holy and righteous One, should pick us up out of our sinful and wretched state, and bestow such a gift upon us. I heard of one man speaking to another of making his fortune : the one he was speaking to was a Christian, and he said to him, "My fortune is made." "Your fortune is made!" "Yes, my fortune is made ; for I have got, through the grace of God, eternal life and the unsearchable riches of Christ." Every child of God, however feebly he may realise it, in virtue of the death of Christ on the cross, has an eternal inheritance—an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven ; and he is being kept by the power of God for it, and shall enter into the realised possession of it when the Lord comes. We are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ ;" and He is heir of all things. "All things are yours, for you are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

We shall now consider for a little God's purpose concerning us through Christ Jesus. "That in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace." God's grace could not flow forth to sinners until He had judged sin in the person of His Son on the cross. He is the God of love, and He loves all His creatures. He loves the very beasts of the field. He takes care of oxen ; and He gave in His law certain injunctions even about a bird's nest. There is a difference between the love that He shows to fallen man and the love which He bestows upon angels. Love can be shown to un-fallen creatures, but grace stoops down deeper. Grace is love shown to those *who do not deserve it*. Grace is love coming down to those who are deeply unworthy of it. That is what God wanted to show, and, with reverence I say it, God could never have shown out the grace that was pent up in His bosom if He had not permitted sin. We have in this a key to unlock the mystery of God's permission of sin. God could never have been known, as He is known to us, as "the God of all grace," unless He had permitted sin. In infinite wisdom, He suffered this terrible thing "*sin*" to creep into His universe ; but man's failure became the occasion for displaying the boundless resources of God's grace.

(To be continued.)

"THE SUNSHINE OF HIS PRESENCE."

 H, "the sunshine of His presence,"
how it cheers me on my road ;
Lightening every grievous burden
as I bow beneath the load.

'Tis a bright and glorious halo, circling round
earth's toilsome way ;
And it speeds me ever onward, while I'm
nearing home each day.


In "the sunshine of His presence" would I
live from day to day ;
Ever know Him close beside me, as I tread
life's changeful way ;
Ever feel His arm upholding, when my
falt'ring footsteps fail ;
When temptations round me gather, doubts
and fears my heart assail.

Sweet "the sunshine of His presence," with-
out which I dare not live ;
For it yields me peace and comfort that *this*
world could never give.
Not a transient fading brightness of some
cloudless summer's day ;
But a sure and firm possession, nevermore
to pass away.

'Tis "the sunshine of His presence," and
His faithful changeless love ;
Gladden weary waiting-hours, till He call
me up above.
But I'm longing, daily longing, for the time
when I shall share
The fulness of its glory, in the bright home
over there.

GLENVAR.

"NONE OF US LIVETH TO HIMSELF."

 HEN a Christian gets
away from the Lord, he
may perhaps be speedily
restored in his own soul ; but what
about others whom he has caused
to stumble during his blacksliding ?
He may seek to retrace his own
steps that had turned aside, but
alas ! he knows not who may even
now be falling into grievous sin, of
whose declension he himself was
the first cause. The Lord Jesus
used solemn words about the man
who should make one of His little
ones stumble. "It were better for
him," He said, "that a mill-stone
were hanged about his neck, and
he cast into the sea" (Luke xvii. 2).
We remember once hearing of a
party of mountain climbers who
were ascending one of the snow-
clad Alps. As usual, they were
all connected together with ropes,
so that if one stumbled, the rest
might hold him up. One of the
party took a false step, and in a
moment his feet slipped from

under him. But for the rope that attached him to his comrades, he would have gone over a precipice, and been dashed to pieces. That rope, however, saved him, and he almost instantly regained his feet; but the jerk on the rope had caused two of his companions to fall, and, without power to help themselves, they slid swiftly down to the very precipice he had been saved from. As they went over the edge, the rope broke. He was saved himself, but his false step cost his friends their lives. What bitter reflections that poor man must have had! But what to compare to the reflections of a believer, who sees some fellow-saint, whom he first caused to stumble, plunging headlong into sin. When we are out of communion with God, every good thing becomes perverted to an evil purpose. A Christian has been a lover of hospitality. He has delighted to gather his brethren and sisters under his roof, and many an hour have they passed in sweet converse, while their hearts burned within

them, as they spoke of the Lord and "all His ways of wondrous grace." But this brother has begun to get cold in heart, and the change in his own soul begins to show itself in the conversation of those who assemble at his house. It is not so much of the Lord that they talk now, as of fellow-saints. One is criticised, and another is laughed at. But things get worse still. There are some who have a lurking spirit of discontent, which now comes out in various complaints against those who take oversight or who teach or preach. The mischief spreads till fellowship is sadly hindered, and yet no one can tell exactly why. Presently the brother, whose own coldness of heart had been at the beginning of all the mischief, perceives how far he is going astray. He confesses his careless, indifferent ways to the Lord, and is restored in soul again; but he cannot restore those whom he had caused to stumble. He tries to bring back the tone of the conversation to its former happy character; but in vain.

Though restored himself, he has no power over the others, and they gradually cease coming to his house, and find some other place where they can continue, unhindered, the sad style of spending their time that they have learned to take pleasure in. Every good gift of God brings a responsibility to use it for His glory and for the profit of fellow-believers. "None of us liveth to himself," and for the sake of others, as well as for our own sake, we need to watch and pray against the first beginnings of backsliding.

—:o:—

FOR those who seek to minister in the Church, it is not knowledge and utterance only that are needed; but also, and above all, grace and an unblameable walk. While harmless as doves in regard to carnal policy, they should be wise as serpents in respect of spiritual wisdom and prudence, so as to "cut off occasion from them which desire occasion" (2 Cor. xi. 12).

"TO EVERY MAN HIS WORK."

WE are often asked what Scripture teaches as to the way of conducting Gospel meetings in the halls where believers meet to break bread. Who should have the responsibility of such meetings? Those who take oversight in the assembly, or brethren who are specially gifted to preach the Gospel? In considering such questions, we need to remember that, in New Testament days, we never read of the Gospel being preached in the rooms where the saints were wont to assemble together. Those who preached the Gospel, rather went to seek the people in their places of resort, and spoke to them there. So Paul went into the synagogues to preach Christ to the Jews; while at Athens he addressed the people on Mars' hill. There was no difficulty then in getting an audience, for the strange novelty of the Gospel message brought crowds everywhere to hear it. Now, in what is called a Christian

country, we have to go on preaching the same Gospel to people who have heard it a hundred times, but have never been brought under its power. But this is not the whole of our responsibility. Very far from it. We too are called to seek out those who seldom or never go to hear the Word of God, and to carry the message of reconciliation to them; and there are plenty of such persons close to our own doors. But while this is true, it does not answer the question we started with. If assemblies of believers have suitable meeting rooms, it is surely a good thing to make use of them for preaching the Gospel. What help then can we get from the Scriptures as to how their Gospel meetings shall be carried on. There may be no examples of exactly the same kind, but we shall find general principles to guide us. First of all, then, we should remember that the Master gives to "every man his work" (Mark xiii. 34). He gives some, evangelists, as He gives others, pastors and teachers. If one

brother is specially gifted to teach the saints, how fitting that they should gladly accord him the opportunity, say on Lord's day afternoons or on a week evening, to minister the Word to them. Others are specially drawn out to care for the young, and there should be hearty fellowship in giving the use of the room to these, at a suitable hour for a Sunday-school. In the same way, where God has gifted brethren to preach the Gospel, and uses them in the salvation of sinners, there should be no hesitation in entrusting to them the special care of the work to which God has specially called them. But it does not follow, because certain brethren have a special responsibility in this matter that others have none. When the Lord would send Paul and Barnabas out to preach the Gospel, He made their brethren sharers with them in the work (see Acts xiii. 1-3). And Paul and Barnabas delighted to maintain this fellowship; for, when they returned from their evangelistic

journey, we read that they gathered the Church together, and "rehearsed all that God had done with them" (chap. xiv. 27). Paul makes frequent reference to the same subject in his epistles. He asked the saints at Ephesus to pray for him, that he might open his mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel (Eph. vi. 19). He thanked God for the fellowship of the Philippian saints in the Gospel (Phil. i. 5). He desired the prayers of the newly founded Church at Thessalonica, that the Gospel that he preached might have the same free course at other places, that it had had with them (2 Thes. iii. 1). And if believers are responsible to have fellowship in the work of the Gospel in other places, how much more in their own midst. Surely, then, the Gospel meeting should be looked upon as claiming the sympathy, and help, and prayers of all the assembly. But while, on the one hand, we should not needlessly fetter those who are fitted of God to preach His Gospel; we must not forget that the whole

assembly is, of necessity, closely identified with all that is done in their meeting room. Those who take oversight, therefore, should feel that they have a responsibility that no doctrine, other than that of the Scriptures, is preached; and that no practices, contrary to God's Word, are indulged in. A notion seems to prevail in many places that the platform in the meeting-room should be a sort of exercising ground, where every brother should take his turn and try what he can do. Here, as in all other service which the assembly owns and takes responsibility for, the words apply, "let these also first *be proved*"; then let them serve" (1 Tim. iii. 10). There is plenty of sphere for beginners. Street corners can be found in every town and village, and they are the very best school for young beginners. Cottage meetings can be arranged. Personal dealing, in house-to-house visiting, is excellent training for gospel preachers. A preacher of the gospel who has no experience of this personal

dealing, is like a doctor who has studied from books, and has never had any bed-side practice. But how often we see young brethren anxious to get on a platform, and speak to an audience that they had not helped to bring together, while they had never shown any readiness to labour in the gospel in the true sense of the word. Paul's preaching was publicly, and from house to house (Acts xx. 20, 21); and he exhorted Timothy, after the same pattern, to be "instant, in season out of season." When brethren are proved by their diligence in gospel labours, and by God's owning their service in the saving of souls, then the assembly need not hesitate to entrust the preaching in the hall to such.

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COL. iv. 10 is a testimony that Mark was restored and stablished after having forsaken Paul and Barnabas. We find him not with Barnabas, but with Paul, who had so gravely judged his fault. "Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee" (Prov. ix. 8).

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THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER OF FAITH.

(HEB. xii. 2.)

IN the second chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, and the 10th verse, we read that "it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." The word "Captain" in this passage is exactly the same word as "author" in Heb. xii. 2, while "make perfect" in the one place is the same as "finisher" in the other. In the authorised version, Heb. xii. 2 reads, "the Author and Finisher of *our* faith," and the revisers have not changed this. As both of them print the word "our" in italics, they admit that it is not to be found in the original; and,

indeed, it quite destroys the sense of the passage. "The author of our faith" would mean the one who produced faith in us; but that is not at all what is being spoken of. The word for "author" only occurs in three other places. In Acts iii. 15 and v. 31, it is translated "Prince;" and in Heb. ii. 10, as we have already said, it is rendered "Captain." The word means literally one who goes before and leads; and this is just what is set before us here in connection with the Lord Jesus. He is said to be Captain in this place, not because He commands His people, but because He has gone before them in the pathway of faith, and has thus shown them a pattern. Then, again, the word "Finisher" tells us that what He did was perfectly done, and was carried through to the end. He has gone before

us in the path of faith, and from first to last His heart's perfect trust in God never failed. It is in this sense that He is called "the Captain of our salvation." He is the One who first trusted and overcame and sang the victor's song; (see Psa. xl. 1-3) and He testifies of that which He has proved in His own experience, when He adds (ver. 4), "Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust." But when did He begin this walk of faith? Listen to His own answer: "But Thou art He that took Me out of the womb; Thou didst make Me hope ("trust," see R. V.) when I was upon My mother's breasts" (Psa. xxii. 9). Perhaps we are inclined to wonder sometimes why the blessed Son of God had to pass through the period of infancy, with all its helpless dependence. Surely one reason, though not the only one, was that He might show us the pattern of an unbroken life of faith in God. Is there any thing in nature that speaks more sweetly of tender care, of nourishment, of protection, than

a mother's bosom? And is there any thing more helpless, more completely dependent, than the babe who rests there? The Son of God, who made the worlds and upholds them with the word of His power, having emptied Himself of all His might and majesty, hung as a little infant on His mother's breasts, and there learned to trust God. As He grew up from infancy to manhood, He was always the perfect truster. Satan might say, "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." But it was not by His independence of God, but by His perfect dependence upon Him, that Jesus was ever manifested as the Son of God; and this entire dependence showed itself in His reply, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." But it was when the cross was reached that His faith was most fully manifested. There, forsaken of God, He yet trusted Him. Circumstances might change, but His confidence had

never been in circumstances. A babe may learn to trust its mother, as it hangs upon her breast. But He learned something more than this: He learned to trust God. And when the shelter and nourishment and sweetness of His mother's bosom were exchanged for the anguish and desolation of the cross, that trust in God remained unshaken. Circumstances all belong to God. The mother's bosom and the cross were alike appointed by Him; and as such they were received by His trusting and obedient Son. Thus the pathway of faith, which commenced with the lowly dependence of the babe on its mother's breast, was completed amid the agonies of Calvary. And all the sons whom He is leading on to glory are being instructed after the same pattern. Blessed indeed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust. All things are by God, and all things are for Him; and He still uses sufferings as well as joys in the perfecting of each one whom He has redeemed for Himself.

"THEY WATCH FOR YOUR SOULS."

I DON'T see any harm in it. I am not going to give it up just because some of the brethren don't like it." But did they ask you to give the thing up, whatever it may be, because they didn't like it, or because it was not pleasing to God? Stop and think a moment. These brethren are watching for your soul, as they that must give account. What will they be able to say to God when they speak to Him of you in their prayers? In Heb. xiii. 17, we read, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." When those who take oversight render account to God about you, do you think they do it with joy and thankfulness, or with a sorrowing heart? If the latter, be sure you will be a loser. Paul could write to the

Philippian saints, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you" (Phil. i. 3); and to the Thessalonians, "We give thanks to God always for you all" (1 Thes. i. 2); and surely it was a happy thing for them that he could thus speak to God about them. Look at the contrast in the case of the Galatian churches; "I am afraid of you," he says, "lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Gal. iv. 11). Or, of the Corinthians, to whom he wrote, "I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would" (2 Cor. xii. 20). Sad indeed, must have been the account he rendered to God in such cases; and, oh! how unprofitable to those to whom he had thus to write. It is well to think of the joy and gladness of those who are doing shepherd work, when they can give thanks for the godly steadfastness of the souls for whom they are seeking to have a care. Is it not closely akin to the "exceeding joy" with which the great Shepherd will present us faultless before His presence? What a heavy load of

care and sorrow the self-willed behaviour of younger believers has often added to the labours of God's servants. Sleepless hours by night and increasing toil by day have helped to break down the health of those who were willing to spend and be spent for the flock of Christ. But are we willing that the judgment seat shall reveal that we have had a share in shortening the days of some of God's honoured instruments? How short-sighted and how selfish sin is. It robs God, it robs God's servants, and all for a little of pleasing self for a moment, while at last we shall find that we have robbed ourselves more than any one else.

—:o:—

IT is a bad sign of us when we are not willing that our deeds should be brought to the light. "He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." If we are not willing that the light should be brought to bear on our deeds, we are safe to conclude that they will not stand the light.

THE POWERS THAT BE.

THE Houses of Parliament have been passing another Reform Bill, as it is called, and large numbers of the inhabitants of the British Isles, who were never before entitled to vote, will be doing so at the next general election. Doubtless many children of God will be exercised in conscience as to what they ought to do in regard to this matter; and, though the subject has been dealt with before in this periodical, we think it will not be amiss to refer to it again at the present time. The first thing that strikes us, when we turn to the New Testament for guidance on the point, is that we do not find a single precept, or a single example to warrant the children of God in having anything to do with the government of the nations. There are special directions to guide us in the various relationships we may fill. Husbands and wives are taught how to behave to one another. So are parents and children, and so also are

masters and servants. But there is not one word as to how Christian rulers or legislators are to conduct themselves. It is quite true, that, as subjects, Christians are commanded to obey the "powers that be" (see Rom. xiii. 1-7); but there is no corresponding teaching for rulers. But perhaps some one will answer that this very passage in Romans tells us that "the powers that be are ordained of God," and that whoever resists the power, resists the ordinance of God. If, then, the powers that be are ordained of God, why should not a child of God help to elect them, or himself take part in the affairs of government? To this we would first of all reply that, at the very time when Paul wrote those words, the Emperor Nero, one of the most wicked and cruel tyrants that ever sat on a throne, was reigning at Rome over the greater part of the known world. In Dan iv. 25, we read, "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will"; and again, at verse 35, "He doeth

according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, what doest Thou?" God, in His government of the world, can use what instrument He pleases. He sets up one and puts down another, and in this sense they are ordained by Him; but this does not imply that there is any fellowship between Himself and them, or that they are consciously fulfilling His will. If we are to have a clear and intelligent understanding of this subject, we must endeavour to trace the whole history of God's government of the world, and the share in it which He has appointed to man. When God first created man, He gave him dominion over all the works of his hands (see Gen. i. 28); and until sin came in, man ruled for God and in fellowship with God. After man's fall, the earth became full of corruption and violence, and God destroyed all the earth except Noah and his household. Once again God entrusted rule to Noah (see Gen.

ix. 1-6); but at chapter xi., we find all the inhabitants of the world casting off the authority of God, and God confounding and scattering them. At the end of this chapter, however, we see Abram leaving the home of his father and journeying to Canaan; and chapter xii. 1, tells us that he did this in obedience to the call of God. In this call, we have the beginning of a new chapter in the history of God's government of the world. God no longer purposed (or at least not till thousands of years should have passed away) to resume the direct government of man by means of His own servants, acting according to His words entrusted to them. Satan had usurped authority, and man had deliberately accepted his rule. God would never surrender His own absolute control, but He could no longer reign as a king among loyal subjects, and He was therefore giving up the nations to the dominion of Satan, who still continues to be "the prince of this world" (John xiv. 30). God purposed, however, to make a

people for Himself, and to separate them from all the other nations, and to dwell in their midst, and to give them His commandments. So God called Abram out of Mesopotamia, and told him that He would make of him a great nation, and would give them the land of Canaan for their inheritance. But though these promises were given to Abram, and Abram, in obedience to God's call, left his own country and went to live in Canaan, he lived there as a pilgrim and a stranger. The Canaanitish nations were still in the land, which was Abram's by promise, and Abram must not anticipate God's time by taking a place of authority, which must involve fellowship with the enemies of God. Poor Lot, first drawn aside by the hope of gain, is presently found in the seat of authority in wicked Sodom (see Gen. xix. 1. Sitting in the gate was always the place of rule and authority). But look at the result. God communes with faithful Abram at his tent door, but the angels of God can scarcely drag

Lot and his household out of Sodom, before executing judgment upon its guilty inhabitants. His place, as a magistrate, necessitated fellowship with those wicked people, and, though God saved His own child from the wrath that fell on the others, how terribly the mistake of seeking to rule where God is not owned, was thus manifested.

(To be continued in our next.)

OUR LIFE WORK.

BEARING the burden of those oppressed,
Cheering the weary, the worn, the distressed,

Speaking a word, or giving a hand,
Helping them on through the desert land.
Here He has left us as lights to shine,
Reflecting Himself and His ways divine.

Pointing lost sinners to Christ above,
Telling the tale of redeeming love;
Willing to suffer distress or shame,
Honouring thus His adorable name;
Doing whatever will please Him most,
Serving the Master *at any cost*.

Seeking to please Him in little things,
Knowing that this oft most honour brings;
Losing myself in His service so blest,
Still looking on to Eternity's rest.
Following Christ in the "*narrow way*,"
This is our life-work from day to day.

GLENVAR.

THE EXCEEDING RICHES OF GOD'S GRACE.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS ON EPH. II. 1-7.

(Continued from page 137.)

SIN is rebellion against the authority of God; and if it had been allowed to go on unheeded and unchecked, it would have wrought and wrought on until it had dethroned God. Hence the necessity that God should deal with sin. God's grand purpose was to manifest His grace, and hence He has chosen to show that grace to the most degraded and wicked of all His creatures. Paul calls himself "the chief of sinners." He was in many respects a pattern man. I believe that the Lord intended him to be so. He was a pattern man as to his outward religious character. He says that, as touching the righteousness which is in the law, he was blameless. But what was he as to his heart? He had the most intense hatred to the Lord Jesus of any man that walked on the face of the earth. Not even the bloodthirsty Roman,

that stood by the cross of Christ, and pierced His side, hated the blessed Son of God with the intensity that Saul the persecutor hated Him! Could there be a sin in the sight of God to compare with this? Did not that show how utterly corrupt and wicked was the heart of this man, who could so hate the name of Jesus and His Gospel, and who was so enraged against the beloved people of Christ as to seek to murder them? But the Lord from the height of His glory, where man's rejection had put Him, looked down, as it were, to see where was the man on the face of the whole earth *that hated Him most*. Why? Because He was about to display His grace. Therefore, He took up *that* man who so hated Him, and stopped him while in the very act of "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" against the name of Jesus. As he journeyed to Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven shone round about him, and he fell to the earth blinded by the glory of that light. He might have fallen to the earth

dead and damned, and righteously so. But instead of that, he fell to the earth *only to be saved for ever*. He was saved to manifest *the exceeding riches of God's grace*. Now, you see what God does with great sinners who believe on His Son. His grace is magnified in His dealings with them. We see this throughout the Scriptures. I was hearing the other day of God having saved some of the very worst men in a certain town. It is the same throughout the world. I was also reading of a certain king in an island in the Pacific Ocean, who was a most wicked, cruel, barbarous man. He had committed most awful cruelties on some of his subjects who had confessed Christ. Yet God saved that man, and made him a monument of His mighty grace. Whilst God manifests His grace in saving such great sinners, He utterly abhors sin. I can see that nowhere so plainly as in the cross of Christ. Those who were dead in trespasses and sins, thus saved at such a cost, become eternal monuments of His saving grace.

Look at them as they shine in glory, washed in the blood of the Lamb. See them reflecting the very image of Jesus; brought nearer to the throne than even the angels and seraphim. See them sitting with priestly robes and victors' crowns, praising God and the Lamb. What were they? Idolaters, adulterers, thieves, drunkards, extortioners, and such like; but they are washed, sanctified, and justified through the precious blood of Christ. Yes, even such have been saved, in order that God might show the exceeding riches of His grace. It has pleased Him, in the riches of His grace, not only to save the very vilest of sinners, but to do so on terms that show how perfect His grace is. The Lord Jesus makes no demands; He saves for nothing. Yet, it may be that you who are saved come to Him grudgingly with your service or your money. To such the Lord says, "Who hath required this at your hands?" He says, "Not grudgingly, nor of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver." Necessity! Where is the

necessity? God never speaks of necessity to any one who would serve Him, but He puts His grace before such. He says, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye, through His poverty, might be rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9). If such wondrous grace does not draw forth some response from your heart, it must be hard indeed! You see how God meets us in perfect grace. He asks no righteous works or good deeds from us; no payment of any sort. Even our faith is not in His sight a meritorious act. God does not reward us with salvation for our faith. That is a miserable way of looking at faith. Faith is just taking God at His word; it is simply resting on what God has said and on what Christ has done. Faith is ceasing from all works, and lying down helpless on the sure word of God; and this is the reason that God saves only through faith. It is simply and alone in order that His grace might be

manifested. "Therefore, it is of faith, that it might be by grace." Most gloriously does the grace of God shine out in *the cost at which He saves*. I wish you to mark this, because nothing ever did, ever will, or ever can show out God's grace so perfectly as the giving up of His Son to the death of the cross. It is in that mighty, wondrous act that God's grace shines out most gloriously. It is as I see God's beloved Son, who dwelt in His bosom from eternity, the One in whom was all His delight, sent forth into this world, in order that He might be the propitiation for our sins, that I see God's grace manifested as it is in no other way. Turn with me to 1 John iv. 9, 10. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Mark the two things that are put together here. First, God in grace coming

to us with this wondrous gift, His only begotten Son, in order *that we might live*, and "*live through Him.*" Secondly, before God could give us life in Christ, the Son of God must come and be "the propitiation for our sins." If God is to show mercy to the sinner, or grace to the guilty, it can only be *on the ground of atonement.* God would be surrendering His own character if He were to show sympathy with sin. He could never pardon a guilty sinner on any other ground than the blood of Christ. If He is to show grace, it can only be consistently with His holy and righteous character. He could not show grace at the expense of righteousness, nor mercy at the expense of holiness. In the cross of Christ we see mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace kissing each other (Psa. lxxxv. 10). "Grace reigns through righteousness;" through the atoning blood of Christ. The inflexible righteousness of God's character demands that He shall not pardon any sinner apart from the blood of Christ. It

is well that we be perfectly clear about this, because in these days the most fashionable religion is setting aside the old-fashioned doctrine of salvation, pardon and life eternal, only through the atoning blood of Christ. Those who do not believe in atonement through the precious blood of the Son of God say, that it is not righteous in God to punish the innocent for the guilty; and that it is not righteous in God to put our sins upon Jesus, and to punish Him for us. That is one of Satan's devices to wile away from the truth. Injustice it would have been had Christ not been a willing substitute. But therein lies all the difference. If I were sentenced to pay a fine or go to prison, it would indeed be injustice to compel you to pay it for me, and let me go free. But if you came forward voluntarily, and, from love to me, offered to pay the fine, where then is the injustice? The law accepts it, and is magnified, and justice cannot gainsay it. Now, Christ was willing, in obedience to His Father

and from love to guilty sinners, to lay down His life for such. He delighted to do His Father's will; and, for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross. Jesus suffered, "the Just for the unjust:" *He chose to do it.* He saw what glory would be brought to God by it; He saw how His character would be displayed, as a God of infinite holiness and inflexible righteousness, and yet of boundless mercy and grace. But this could never be apart from the shedding of His precious blood. He counted the cost of bringing sinners to God, even to His very throne. He saw all that was before Him, and set His face stedfastly to do the will of His Father, even unto the death of the cross. In virtue of all that He passed through for sinners, He could say to His own beloved ones, and to all who trust in Him—"My peace I give unto you"; "My joy I give unto you." He brings us, through His sin-atonement, into fellowship with His own eternal peace and joy.

(To be concluded next month.)

JEHOVAH-JIREH.

"**I** HAVE been a member of a Christian church for a good many years," said a brother in the Lord to us recently, "but I have felt again and again that things were not as they should be. I believe that God has qualified me to be of some help to others; but where one man conducts the whole service, there is no room for any one's gifts but his own. I think it will not be long before I shall take my place where I shall have liberty to exercise whatever gift God has bestowed upon me." We often meet with believers who appear dissatisfied for just the same reason, and we are not surprised at it. Nothing can be more contrary to the practice of New Testament times, than for one man to take up the whole time when saints assemble to worship, while every one else's mouth is closed. But yet there is another and a far more important point of view from which the subject should be regarded, than that from which the above

mentioned brother was looking at it. It is true that the one man in the pulpit deprives all other believers present of the opportunity to minister the word of God to their brethren, or to lead their prayers and praises. But is it not also true that he has first of all deprived the Lord Jesus Himself of His place as Lord in the assembly of His own saints? It is true that 1 Cor. xii. shows us a body with many members all having different offices, and each one contributing to the good of all. But it first of all tells us of Jesus as Lord, and makes the acknowledgment of His authority the very foundation of the whole matter. Jesus having gone up to the throne of God, has sent down the Holy Spirit, who divides "to every man severally as He will" (see verse 11). So in Eph. iv., verse 7, tells us that "unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ;" while the chapter goes on to show us how Christ has ascended, and how, from His place of authority and power, He bestows

gifts upon men. Now, when believers are gathered together around the Lord, the first thing they need to be assured of is, that He Himself is in their midst. If we truly believed this, do you think we should ever doubt His sufficiency for all we need? And we may be very sure that distrust of Him is at the bottom of all human devices for supplying suitable ministry to God's children. But we are much more ready to perceive that we have been robbed of our privileges, than to see that the Lord Jesus has been robbed of His glory. When we are all gathered around the throne, and see Him there, still the Lamb as it had been slain, yet occupying the place of majesty and power, would any of us dream for a moment of depriving Him of His authority? Then why should we do it here? The ark, with its mercy-seat covering, formed the throne of God in the temple at Jerusalem. There God dwelt in the midst of His people, ruling over them and blessing them. How different the surroundings were

now, to what they had been all through the forty years in the wilderness. Then the ark stood upon the desert sand ; now it rests upon the golden floor of the oracle. Then the tabernacle in which it was placed consisted of boards and curtains, and was all covered up with the unsightly badgers' skins. Now the house of God, with its gold and silver and costly stones, is glorious alike within and without, the wonder of all who see it. But it is the very self-same ark, which was carried on the shoulders of the priests all through those forty years of wandering in the wilderness, and which has now taken up its resting-place in Zion, the chosen habitation of Jehovah. And faith would yield the same loyal subjection to the authority of that throne then, when none of its glory was manifested, as now, when surrounded by tokens of its power that none can gainsay. But whether in the wilderness or in Canaan, Israel obeyed God as their Lord, just as long as they trusted Him as their Deliverer and Provider.

When they doubted His ability to provide them with bread and water, at once they rebelled against Him. "They spake against God ; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" (Psa. lxxviii. 19). When they doubted His power to bring them into the land of promise, and to subdue before them the giants that were there, their unbelief immediately led to open defiance of God's authority. They would have a way of their own, and a leader of their own. "Let us make a captain," they said, "and let us return into Egypt" (Numb. xiv. 4). Just so it is to-day. The throne of God yields us all our supplies and claims all our obedience ; and the Lord Jesus, who once stooped to death to obtain eternal salvation for us, now sits at the right hand of the majesty on high, to dispense all the inexhaustible abundance of that throne, and to exercise all its authority. If the unbelief of our hearts is saying, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" we shall be sure to turn to some man-made substitute for that which God alone can provide. What was the secret of Abraham's obedience in the last supreme test of his faith? His

reply to Isaac's enquiry will tell us. "Behold the fire and the wood," said Isaac, "but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "My son, GOD WILL PROVIDE Himself a lamb for a burnt offering." And when Abraham's faith had received from God the very thing that he had trusted Him for, Abraham called the name of the place, "Jehovah Jireh," the Lord will provide; and there God renewed to Abraham all His promises of future blessing and glory. Even so to us, Calvary, the place of the Lamb of God's providing, becomes the pledge to faith that nothing shall fail us here or hereafter. But the Lamb on the throne is the Lamb that was, first of all, a sacrifice on the alter. Are we learning to know God as Jehovah-Jireh? Then, assuredly, we shall be learning to obey Him. A deeper sense of what the cross has obtained for us is the only thing that will teach us to give the Lord Jesus His proper place under all circumstances. If we would know what He can be to His assembled saints, we need, just as much as for our individual needs, to pray—

O Lamb of God, still keep me
Near to Thy wounded side.

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THE

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WHY WERE THEY TROUBLED?

WHEN the Magi appeared in Jerusalem and asked the question, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" we read that Herod was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him (Matt. ii. 2, 3). Now, we can easily understand why *Herod* was troubled. He had nothing to gain, but everything to lose, if a "king of the Jews" established his throne in Judea. To the Edomite usurper, there could not have been more unwelcome tidings than the announcement of a new-born king. He was troubled; and it was natural he should be so. But why was "all Jerusalem" troubled with him? This seems more difficult to understand. Was not every Jew waiting for the promised

Messiah? Were they not longing for the expected Deliverer? Were they not praying that the set time to favour Zion might come? Did not the very sight of that Roman sentinel, remind them that the glory had departed from Israel? Did not every appearance of the hated tax-gatherer wring from their heart the cry, "Come, great Messiah, come?" Why, then, were they troubled by the question of the wise men—a question which, above all others, should have caused their hearts to leap for joy? They had been praying that the Messiah might come; and, now that He has come, they are troubled! What did it mean? It meant that they were now God's chosen people only in name. They had so grievously departed from the living God, that, although they kept up all the form of godliness, they were

utter strangers to its power. The temple worship was rigorously carried out; the synagogue services were scrupulously attended to; mint, and rue, and anise, and cummin were carefully tithed; the tombs of the prophets were duly garnished. In short, everything of an outward and visible nature in the domain of religion was performed with the most undeviating exactness; yet, all the while, inwardly, they were rotten to the core. They were Abraham's seed: this was undisputed. To them had been committed the oracles of God (Rom. iii. 2); and Jerusalem was undoubtedly the place where men ought to worship (John iv. 20). So far as *position* was concerned, they were right; but, as to condition, they were in as deplorable a state as could possibly be conceived. Through continued rejection of light, the light that was in them had become darkness; and now they

“Knew not when He came,
E'en God's eternal Son!”

The hour of their merciful visitation

had arrived, yet, they recognized it not. Yea, the very first notes of the great jubilee trump awoke no response in their self-blinded hearts—*they were troubled*. Herod was troubled, and they were troubled with him. They seemed to be of one mind with the very man whom they had every reason to detest. How like the world they had become. That which troubled the world troubled them. Herod, the worldling, and God's ancient people were at one. How solemn all this is for those of us who are God's people by a heavenly birth—who have come out to the name of the rejected One, and who profess to be waiting for the Son from heaven (1 Thes. i. 10). As to our church position, we may well praise our God for the wonderful things He has shown us out of His law. We take our stand on the rock of His truth; and we thank Him for where we are. But what about the condition of our souls before God? Are we sanctifying the Lord God in our hearts? Is the meekness and gentleness of

Christ being manifested in our daily walk? In a word, is it clear to all around, that we have not only God's truth with us, but God's power in us? If such be not the case, then rest assured that we shall be found mourning in fellowship with the Herods, and rejoicing with them, too, when they rejoice. These things ought not so to be. How sad to see the Lord's people at one with the world, when He has said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament but the world shall rejoice!" We believe these are times when the lines of separation have to be more closely drawn than ever; or, rather, when the lines of separation which *God* has drawn should be more closely adhered to than ever. We are sometimes told, that, as we become older in the Christian race we get "more enlarged ideas" as to association with the world. All we can say in reply to this, is, that we cannot find any of such enlarged ideas in the Book that God has given us. On the contrary, the more we learn of Him, the more

clearly we see that "the whole world lieth in the wicked one." A well-known servant of Christ, lately gone to his rest, once said, that if we are walking daily in the presence of God, we shall find the path narrower to-day than it was six months ago, and narrower six months hence than it is to-day, until, in spirit, we find ourselves "in the lonely path with the lonely Man." Such were *his* "enlarged ideas" as to our path of separation here below. What we want, beloved, is to have the power of God really among us. We may have all the outward forms, while devoid of the inward power. We may be zealous for the truth, while we have but little heart for the God of truth; and, like the Jews of old, we may be praying, "Come, Lord Jesus," when, if assured that He would return to-night, we should be "troubled" at the tidings. This is searching. Let us see that we are *real* for God and for His Christ. Let us beware of making any compromise with the world, or joining with them in any of their so-called

“laudable undertakings.” If we are truly waiting for the Son from heaven, and dwelling in the secret place, we have no fear that we shall be found making common cause with the Christ-rejectors. Ours shall be that heavenly anointing, whereby we shall at once discern the wiles of Herod, although he, too, may profess to be a worshipper of Israel's King (Matt. ii. 8).

—:o:—

“KEEP the heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.”

“IT is good for a child of God to search his heart, that he may know whether it is by nature or by grace that he is kept from outward evil. Fear of shame, love of reputation, power of conscience, natural affection, self-interest, greatly preserve the unregenerate from the commission of sin; and may in part also keep the children of God from defiling their garments. But it is only by the power of grace, and when the heart keeps the life, that our ‘good conversation’ is a sweet savour to God.”

THE POWERS THAT BE.

(Continued from page 149.)

WE may pass on now to the time when Abraham's descendants were strangers and bondmen in the land of Egypt. It was God's purpose to make them a kingdom for Himself, but He must first bring them out of Egypt. Notice here, that Moses had occupied a place of great power and influence in Pharaoh's court. Judged by the light of natural reason, we should have said that this was a providential arrangement to enable him to help his down-trodden and oppressed countrymen. But God, who had chosen Moses to be a ruler and lawgiver to His people, never meant that he should rule in fellowship with the ungodly. Moses' position at the Egyptian court was to be the test of his faith, instead of the providential opening that it looked like. “By faith” he gave it all up, and for forty years he was unable to do a single thing for the help of his brethren. But at the end of

those forty years, God's time had come to deliver His people; and now God could use the man who had "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." So Israel were brought through the Red Sea; and its waters, closing behind them, became the waters of separation between them and the place of their former bondage. Now, but not before, God could give them His commandments; and the man, whom God had first made their deliverer, He now makes their ruler and judge. But let us notice here again, that in God's kingdom there is no room for any one to make laws. God makes His own; and all who rule for Him, from the king downwards, are simply an executive government; they have no legislative authority, they can only carry out the laws entrusted to them. Whether, therefore, the children of Israel were wandering through the wilderness, or whether they were established in the promised land, their position was alike in this respect. God had separated

them from the other nations, and had given them His own commandments; and when the time came for them to have a king, that king was God's anointed, ruling by His direct authority. In this kingdom, then, God's servants might take part in rule and government; but, as we have noticed before, it could only be as the executive, to carry out the divine laws. But, notwithstanding all the advantages of their position, the Israelites corrupted their way before God; till, at last, God determined to take power and rule away from them, and to hand it over to the Gentiles. But oh! what a difference we find in the whole manner of the exercise of rule and government after this. We no longer have God's servants administering His laws, but men who were wholly ignorant of God, carrying out their own wills. First we have the absolute rule of the Chaldæan monarchs. Whom they would they slew, and whom they would they kept alive (see Dan. v. 19). Then a somewhat limited monarchy was exer-

cised by the kings of the Medes and Persians. Afterwards, in the Grecian kingdom, a much larger measure of popular control was added; and, last of all, democratic and representative government found a still fuller representation in the days of the Roman Republic. It is true that, from first to last, God was over all. He could turn the hearts of men as He pleased, and make all the ambition, and pride, and passion of man accomplish His purposes. Kings and rulers, in this sense, were His ministers, even though they had never heard His name, or only heard it to scoff at it. For the true-hearted servant of God, therefore, if he had "understanding of the times," there was no place in such governments. Nevertheless, God's promises as to a king to reign in Zion, were held fast by those who really trusted in Him; and they looked for Messiah to come and restore the kingdom to Israel (see Acts i. 6). Well! the Messiah came, and the nation rejected Him, and God rejected the guilty nation.

The dispensation of the earthly people, with their earthly land of promise and worldly sanctuary, was broken off. The Son of God was crucified on earth, but received back into heaven; and God commenced to gather out of all nations, a heavenly people, who should share with Christ in His rejection here, and be joint heirs with Him of His coming glory. This is just the point at which the attitude of the saints of this dispensation towards the world-rulers becomes quite plain. "My kingdom is not of this world," said the Lord to Pilate, "if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is My kingdom not from hence" (John xviii. 36). Does not this hold good to-day as much as then? Does it not as much forbid the one who is born of God to join in political as in military strife. The Society of Friends are vehement in denouncing the trade of war as wholly wrong in a disciple of the Lord Jesus; but they do not hesitate

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to immerse themselves in political contests. Now there was a time when the servants of God were commanded to fight, but then God's kingdom was of this world. In itself, there is nothing in fighting more unbecoming the servant of Christ than in sitting on the bench to try criminals. God's servants did both by God's command; and what is more, they will again do both, and God will be glorified in it all. But in the past dispensation as well as in that to come, we find it is only in connection with a kingdom set up on earth by God, that God's people were called to any such service. It is here that the "understanding of the times" is so greatly needed. In political and religious matters alike, many who profess to lead and teach the people are leading them terribly astray. Failing to discern the difference between this dispensation and those that went before and shall follow it, they have brought about a meaningless imitation of Old Testament shadows in their religious worship, and an equally

false and confusing imitation of Jewish order of government in their politics. Slowly, but surely, the brittle clay of a wide-spread democracy is taking the place of kingly rule. The two cannot mingle, and in the strife between them for supremacy there is no part for God's servant. Presently the Stone cut out of the mountain, without hands, will fall on the feet of the image, and grind the whole to powder (see Daniel ii. 34, 35), and then Christ setting up His long promised kingdom on earth, will associate with Himself His ancient people, who shall govern righteously and execute judgment in fellowship with their Lord. But perhaps some may say, You have told us what we must not do, but have said nothing about what we ought to do in connection with the rule of this world. Are we to be careless and unconcerned spectators of all that is going on around us? Have we no responsibility as regards national righteousness or iniquity? To these important questions we desire to give a careful answer, and, by the help of God, we will deal with them next month.

THE EXCEEDING RICHES OF GOD'S GRACE.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS ON EPH. II. 1-7.

(Continued from page 156).

TURN with me now to John i. 16: "And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." One of God's purposes is to make us like His Son. We are predestinated to be conformed to His blessed image. Christ is the image of God, and we are to bear the image of Christ. God's character is revealed in Christ, and He would have Christ's character revealed in us. How is that to be accomplished? "Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." We get grace from Christ to manifest the grace of His character. Beloved, if we are not learning to walk in grace, to manifest the likeness and character of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is because we know so little of His grace in our souls. God has made us entirely dependent on His grace. Jesus said, "Without Me ye can do nothing." He has

put us in the place of perfect dependence on Himself; so that, if we are to manifest His character, it is only as He lives in us, and works in us, and so enables us through His grace to manifest Him in all our ways. Paul could say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." But, he had heard the Lord saying to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

"God is able to make all grace abound toward you." Do you see from this scripture what God is able to do for us? He is able to make every kind of grace abound toward us. In nature we see how dependent we are on God for the sustainment and preservation of our natural life. It is God that makes the sun to shine, and rain and dew to descend, to cause the fruits of the earth to grow and ripen. "In Him we live and move and have our being." Even the unconverted man, who neither knows nor acknowledges God, lives unconsciously by the power and grace of God.

Those of you here who have lately been born again, no doubt have been finding out that this is a hard world, and that it has no sympathy with you. Why? Because it had no sympathy with Christ. What you need in the midst of the opposition and hatred of a godless world, is the sustaining and upholding grace of God. Well then, surely "the God of all grace" is "able to make all grace abound toward you." There is no short supply of grace with God. All that He wants of you is simple constant trust in Himself. He just wants you to drink in His grace—to receive of His fulness. Just as at the first, we came to Him as poor, guilty, convicted sinners, and received pardon, peace, eternal life, through the Gospel of the grace of God. So God would have us day by day to be receiving of His fulness—enlightenment, wisdom, strength, sustaining and enabling grace. This is beautifully illustrated in the "Pilgrim's Progress," where we find Christian brought into the inter-

preter's house. He led him to a place where there was a fire burning against a wall, and one pouring water upon it to quench it: yet the more water he poured on the fire the brighter it burned. Christian asked the meaning of this, and the interpreter said that this showed the work of grace wrought in the heart by God's Spirit, and that Satan was trying to extinguish it. So he took him to the other side of the wall where he saw one continually pouring oil into the fire. This illustrates how Christ by the supply of His Spirit meets the constant need of our souls day by day. He has all that we need—wisdom, strength, righteousness, holiness—everything that we need in the midst of this ungodly world. The Lord does not send us a warfare on our own charges; we are not called to go on in our own strength, or wisdom, we may depend on the sustaining grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, at God's right hand. He is able to make all grace abound toward us. Christ is the treasure-house of God's unfailing, boundless

grace. It has pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell, and out of His fulness have we all received. Yon mother with a lot of little children, and the father not earning good wages; you find it hard to get along and pay your way. That is just an opportunity God has given you to trust in Him. Abide in fellowship with Him in all your trials and cares, and He will make your face to shine, and your heart to rejoice in Himself. He is able to show you how to make "both ends meet." Trust Him in your most trying circumstances, lay claim to His grace, He cannot deny Himself. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not *with Him* also freely give us all things."

Then if you fall into sin, there is grace to pardon all your sins. As we look at our life, as God's children, before the world, and see failure and sin, and see how we have come short in glorifying Him, truly there is cause for humbling ourselves before God, and confes-

sing our sins. Hear what He says—"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1 John i. 9). Beloved, do not let Satan insinuate the lie into your heart that you need not expect God to forgive you, seeing you have so grievously sinned against Him. Turn a deaf ear to his wicked, lying insinuations. Hear what God says—"If *any* man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous" (1 John ii. 1). Whenever you commit a sin, go at once to your Father, and humbly confess your sin to Him—tell it to Him, for *His faithfulness and justice are pledged* to grant you a Father's hearty forgiveness—"Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sins."

Thus God's infinite grace meets you at every turn, not only in the midst of your daily temptations and difficulties, but, also in the hour of your defilement and failure. God will never give up the soul that has really trusted in His Son. He will continue His gracious work until, made perfect in the image of

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Christ, you shine eternally as a monument of His saving grace.

In the ages to come, He will indeed show forth in every redeemed one the exceeding riches of His grace. Oh, what a theme of praise there will be in heaven when all the ten thousand times ten thousand of God's angelic hosts shall gather around the redeemed! What a company! Brands plucked out of the burning! Rebels ransomed through the blood! Oh what a sight to see those who were once steeped in sin, occupying the very highest place in heaven! But the most wonderful sight of all will be the love and grace of God shown out in such. As we see the prodigal son sitting at the father's table, attired in the best robe, the ring on his hand, and the shoes on his feet, that indeed is a wonderful sight. But when we turn and see the father who shewed such grace to that prodigal, that is a still more wonderful sight. In heaven, the grandest sight of all will be to see how God is glorified, and how Christ

is glorified in those He washed in His blood, and saved by His power. That is a sight that shall draw forth the endless praises of all heaven. That is a sight that one place alone shall never behold, and that is hell. There those who have rejected God's grace shall dwell for ever in outer darkness, never to see one glimpse of that eternal glory of God's grace, for grace never enters there. But now, any sinner who comes in simple faith to Jesus, and receives Him as his Saviour, shall be a partaker of that precious grace that we have been considering.

—:o:—

THE children of God are apt to think meanly of their prayers and holy things, and to doubt the acceptance of their offerings, because of imperfections. It is well indeed to have the humble mind; but unbelief is not pleasing to God. The prattlings of a child are sweeter in the father's ear than all the best spoken words of a bond-servant. "Without faith, it is impossible to please God."

THERE IS NOTHING BETTER.

“**T**HERE is nothing better for me, than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines.” This was the language of David, immediately after God had delivered him in a most remarkable manner from the hand of Saul. For a long while Saul had been hunting David from place to place, with the full intention of putting him to death; and now, for the second time, God had put Saul into David's power, so that, had David wished it, he could have taken Saul's life, and put an end to his own dangers. But, as on the previous occasion, David refused to hurt the anointed king; and Saul was so touched by his magnanimity, that he was constrained to say, “I have sinned: return, my son, David, for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day (1 Sam. xxvi. 21). And in fulfilment of this promise, Saul abandoned his pursuit of David, and “re-

turned to his place” (verse 25). One would have thought that all this would have been the means of encouraging David's heart, and inspiring him with fresh confidence in God's watchful care of him. But, strange to say, it was just the other way; for the next chapter opens thus: “And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me, than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines.” Think of it! The man who years before had gone out in the name of the Lord of hosts, to meet the giant champion of the Philistines, and had slain him, now says that there is nothing better for him than to seek a refuge among those enemies of the Lord and of Israel. Nothing better for him; oh, what a little step there seems to be between faith's triumphs and a complete downfall. When the danger was pressing and imminent, David was cast upon God, and God delivered him. But as soon as the danger was withdrawn for a time, David

began to look at circumstances and probabilities. "It is not to be expected," he seemed to say to himself, "that I shall always escape so fortunately. I shall be sure to fall into Saul's hands some day." Why so? Would the Lord change, or cease to be able to protect His servant? Oh, no, but David was forgetting God now; and the next moment he was turning in heart to the Lord's enemies for help. Has it never been so with us? In time of pressing need we have cast ourselves upon God, and He did not fail us. But when the pressure was past, we got our eyes off God and upon the difficulties. It seemed as though we could not always expect help and deliverance; and then we began to parley with sin, and to try and justify ourselves for yielding. There is nothing better, we thought, than a compromise; and we settled down to a position that was wholly dishonouring to God. While the Lord lives and reigns, it is downright unbelief on our part that would lead us to be satisfied with anything short of a real and complete obedience. "There is nothing better," means, in effect, the Lord is no longer able to hold me up.

"TRUST HIM."

"Trust in the Lord at all times."

"I will trust and not be afraid."

TRUST Him and fear not, He will hold thy hand,
And gently lead thee onward, day by day;
The desert shall rejoice, and through the sand,
Refreshing streams shall mark thy onward way.

Trust Him, for He alone can safely guide;
Each step thou takest, He has trod before;
Trust only Him, whatever may betide,
Trust Him to-day, trust Him for evermore.

Trust Him when danger thickens round thy way;
Trust Him though anguish fills thy grief-wrung heart;
Still put thy trust in Him, though He should slay;
The peace of perfect trust bids fear depart.

Trust Him at all times, trust in Him alone;
When thou art weary, lean upon His breast;
Has He not called thee His beloved, His own?
His presence shall go with thee, giving rest.

Trust Him in all thy weakness; lean on Him
Who is thine everlasting strength and stay;
Trust Him, for though thine eyes with tears be dim,
His blessed hand shall wipe those tears away.

Trust Him, for His is the Almighty power;
Trust Him, His showers of blessing fall on thee;
Trust Him each moment, trust Him every hour;
Trust Him through life, and for eternity.

**"CONTRARY TO SOUND
DOCTRINE."**

(1 Tim. i. 10.)

SATAN is always trying to separate good walk from good doctrine. If a man's doctrine is good, then the enemy seeks to bring it into discredit by tripping the man in his walk. On the other hand, if a man takes up with any of the mischievous doctrines that undermine the great truths of the cross, Satan will make a point not to tempt that man into anything that will disgrace him before the eyes of his fellows. We remember a Unitarian once saying, "I don't know what you mean about having such a desperately wicked heart, and being tempted to all sorts of sins, I never experience anything of the kind." His doctrine was so effectually doing the devil's work, that on no account would the devil draw him into anything that would make people think ill of him. But how deeply important this makes it that children of God, who know and teach

the truth, shall commend that truth by their walk. "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry," says the Apostle Paul, "as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor. iv. 1-2). He did not merely speak the truth, but he manifested it in the putting away of all that was contrary to sound doctrine, and so commended himself to every man's conscience. Look how he connects the ministry entrusted to him with the mercy he had received. We might well faint when we consider the responsibility attaching to our walk in the sight of men, if we did not know the abounding grace of God, that is able to fulfil in us all the good pleasure of His goodness. No wonder that in his epistles to fellow-labourers in the gospel and in the care of the saints, Paul always wishes for them "grace, mercy, and peace" (see 1 Tim. i. 2; 2 Tim. i. 2; Tit. i. 4).

A SECOND PLACE.

GOD will put up with many things in His children. He bears with their mistakes, and even their waywardness; but there is one thing He will not put up with, and that is *a second place*. He must be *first*. How vain, then, must be the efforts of those who would fain please Him, while they give Him only a second place. The Lord does not want us to do great deeds—bold exploits that make everybody wonder. He wants just to reign in our hearts; and then all the rest will come right. The question with us then comes to be simply this: Are we willing that the Lord should take the helm? Are we agreeable that He should be *first*? We are here reminded of a little girl who puzzled her teacher by telling him there was a place where God was not. "Where is that?" he asked. She answered, "*God is not in the divided heart.*" Let us remember this. Our God is a jealous God, and will not have a rival in our hearts.

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“HOW MUCH OWEST
THOU?”

“**I** BESEECH you, therefore, brethren, *by the mercies of God.*” Which of us has yet been able to count up God's mercies, or to measure His grace to us? Surely, we shall all say, they are without limit. But if we own this with our lips, what do our lives say? It was plainly to be seen that Mary Magdalene owed much, for she loved much, and her love showed itself at every turn. But it is not merely in our direct dealings with the Lord that we are to express our gratitude, and show our sense of how much we owe. When a brother does us an injury, it is a grand opportunity to show what we think about the great debt that has been forgiven us. Paul once wrote to Philemon

about Onesimus, the runaway slave: “If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee aught, put that on mine account.” And we often think that this is just a pattern of the way the Lord speaks to us in regard to our grievances against our brethren and sisters. “Put that on mine account,” He says, when we are full of some great wrong that has been done us. And which way would the balance be then? Surely the grace of God has once for all made us debtors to love one another; and until we have come to the end of His grace to ourselves, we have not come to the time when we are entitled to say to our brother: “Pay me that thou owest.” Even if I go to tell my brother of his fault, it should always be with a heartfelt sense that God has made me his debtor, and that I am

responsible to God to seek for my brother's restoration and healing. "Lord, help me to show how much I owe Thee, in the way I go to my brother," would be a safe prayer, when we are thinking of acting on the instructions in Matt. xviii. When the younger son in Luke xv. had once tasted of his father's love, every commandment his father might afterwards give him would seem to come with all the power of that love accompanying it. Every mercy that he had received would lend force to his father's words. Just so with God's commandments to His people. Even when He gave the law to the children of Israel, it was the same thing. We think of the terrors of Sinai, of the thunder and the thick clouds; but these are not the first things which the Scriptures connect with the mountain and the giving of the law. Look at Exodus xix. 3-5: "And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, 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." Is it not just like Rom. xii. 1, 2? But what were their mercies compared with ours? They were saved from Pharaoh's tyranny; but we from the awful dominion of Satan. They had been sheltered under the blood of a lamb; but for us the Son of God shed His precious blood. They were journeying to an earthly inheritance—we to a heavenly. But even then faith discerned something more than all this. "I have brought you unto Myself." That was the crowning mercy then, and surely it is the same now. And how reasonable that we should present our bodies a living sacrifice, when God beseeches us on the ground of such mercies. God asks a great deal of us; but has He not good reason

to do so? "I beseech you, *by the mercies of God*, that ye present *your bodies*." Which is the greater? Truly, to yield our *bodies means to give Him every-* thing, but even then shall we not eternally be debtors to His grace? Well may our hearts exclaim :

Teach me, e'en on earth, to show,
By my love, how much I owe.

TWO KINDS OF SUFFERING.

IF I have been wronged, let me remember that it is much better to be a sufferer than a wrongdoer. Peter contrasts two kinds of suffering. The one is, being buffeted for our faults; and the other is, enduring grief suffering wrongfully (1 Peter ii. 19). No thanks to us if we are buffeted for our faults; and, perhaps, that is the very reason we find such buffeting so hard to bear. But if we are suffering wrongfully, it is different. We are sustained by the consciousness of our own integrity, and that our suffering is acceptable with God.

"THE POWERS THAT BE."

(Continued from page 167).

WE promised last month, God helping us, that we would try to consider the natural enquiry—Has the child of God no responsibility as to all that is taking place in the history of the nations? Is he to be an unconcerned spectator of what is going on all around him? We now seek to fulfil our promise. Let us turn again to God's dealings with Sodom, and notice the share which two of God's people had in them. We have already seen (page 151) how powerless Lot was even to save his own family connections from the terrible judgment, which overtook the wicked city. He had accepted the position of a citizen of Sodom, and had doubtless done his best to improve its condition. He had not himself fallen into Sodom's ways, and to the last, he was vexed with their filthy conversation and their unlawful deeds (see 2 Peter ii. 7, 8). But neither his words nor his example can prevail

to move the heart of one of those godless men, and it never seems to enter his head to plead with God on their behalf. Now look at the contrast presented to us in Abraham's case. Abraham had pitched his tent far away from Sodom, but that was just where he could act most powerfully on Sodom's behalf. For there God came to commune with His faithful servant, and to make His purposes known to him. How important it is to have a right understanding as to the thoughts and purposes of God regarding what is all around us.

What delusions God's children are indulging in about the gradual improvement of the world. Education, science, improved laws, and all the rest of the world's schemes, are presently going to put an end to strife and blood-shed, and bring about universal peace and prosperity. So the Lots try to persuade themselves, as they join hands with the philanthropists and politicians of the world in trying to undo the curse that sin has brought in. They cannot help many a

heart-ache meanwhile, as some specially ugly plague spot comes under their notice. "The filthy conversation of the wicked" makes them question at times, whether their theory has not some fatal defect in it. Still they pluck up courage again, and push on with their schemes so vigorously, that they manage to persuade themselves, after all, that things are improving on the whole. They take their measure of things from what they see with their own eyes, and what a mistaken estimate it is. Some there are meanwhile, who, like Abraham, are keeping themselves apart. "Selfish men," the world's philanthropist says—"thinking of nothing but their own poor souls'-salvation; and won't give a hand to lift up fallen humanity out of the dirt." But when the critical moment came, it was Lot who was altogether taken up with saving himself and his children, while Abraham is able to think of the poor guilty city, and has power with God as he pleads on its behalf. And

more than this, God's messengers can only talk to Lot about his own salvation, while Jehovah Himself communes with Abraham, revealing to him all His purpose, and yielding, time after time, to his intercession. Lot had weakly endeavoured to deal with the men of Sodom about themselves. Abraham deals mightily with God on their behalf. True, Sodom fell after all Abraham's pleading. Who can say that, if his faith had ventured further still, he would not have found God still willing to grant his petition? As it was, he proved himself to be a true Israel, having power with God and with men. And this lets us into the whole secret of what should be our attitude towards political strife and all that concerns the governments of the world. When the great king besieged the little city, it was the *wisdom* of the *poor, wise* man that brought deliverance (see Eccl. ix. 14, 15). "But no man remembered that same poor man." We shall do well to ponder the words that follow "Then said I:

wisdom is better than strength, nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard" (ver. 16). What sort of wisdom is here presented to us? Just that which the world despises. It is not practical; it is not according to common sense. Why, when the city was saved, they did not know by whose means deliverance had been wrought. But if they thought lightly of the poor man's wisdom and never heard his words, there was One who heard them. "The words of wise men are heard in quiet, more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools" (ver 17). Lot ruled among Sodom's fools, (for we know that in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, the fools are the children of this world, and the wise men, the prudent men are God's people). But the cry of Abraham was heard in quiet, in the place of communion with God, far removed from the strife and turmoil amid which foolish Lot was vexing his righteous soul. Our place then is that of intercessors, and if we would prevail there, we must take care not to entangle

ourselves with the affairs of this life. "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. ii. 1, 2). This sums up our whole position in the matter. Are we content that our cry shall be heard in quiet by the ear of God, while men despise and condemn us as selfish and useless? Or do we prefer to rule among those who are devoid of heavenly wisdom, and so gain their good word, while all the time we are powerless to help them? Faith looks at the unseen things, and knows how to answer. But unbelief looks at the seen things, and gets involved in the world's strifes and ambitions, till all power is lost alike with God and with men.

—:o:—

If we would profitably reprove another, let us first of all begin by sitting in judgment on ourselves.

THE VOICE OF GOD.



H thou afflicted, tossed with tempest sore,
Not comforted—worn out with misery,

Though angry waves and billows round thee roar,
The still small voice of God doth speak to thee.

Saying, though for one moment I forsook,
Yet with great mercies will I gather thee,
A little wrath My bright smile from thee took,
But now, My everlasting kindness see.

The very hills and mountains will depart,
My goodness never shall remove from thee,
Fear not—thy name is graven on My heart,
Eternal love hast thou received from Me.

And I thy steps for evermore will guide,
Thine enemies and foes thou shalt not fear,
Thou in My everlasting arms shalt hide,
My presence shall sustain, My voice shall cheer.

For I Jehovah, God—thy hand will hold
E'en when thou passest through the watery deep,
Thou art more precious unto Me than gold,
I who have kept, for evermore will keep.

So shall thy way with joy be ever bright,
For I have breathed into thy heart My peace,
Thy God shalt be thine everlasting light,
Thy days of mourning shall for ever cease.

J. P.

OUR CALLING.

THE apostle Peter tells us that we were called *to do well and to suffer for it*. Are we willing to accept that calling? We shall only be able to do so in proportion as we value God's approval more than the praise of men. "If when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (1 Pet. ii. 20). Brethren and sisters sometimes tell us that they have no opportunity to do anything for the Lord; and perhaps with the very next breath they will be saying how unjustly they are blamed by an unfair master or mistress, after they have done their best. Why, here is the very opportunity to serve the Lord that they were asking for. But then, it was not an opportunity of that sort that they wished for. They wanted more liberty to get out to meetings, to teach in the Sunday School, or some such work as that. But the Lord, maybe, is bidding them wait a bit. He means to

test His servant a little before entrusting that kind of work to him. Moses was once in a great hurry to serve the Lord. He went forth to look upon the afflictions of his brethren, and seeing one of them who was being badly treated by an Egyptian, he slew the Egyptian. But the Lord's time had not come yet for Moses to help his oppressed brethren, and he had to be sent for forty years to feed sheep before the Lord could use him. The Lord has some strange schools in which He educates His children—some very remarkable colleges in which to train His servants. An unjust, unkind mistress has many a time been the teacher God has used in disciplining a sister with a self-sufficient, independent spirit. A sister in service does not like something that was said to her, and she gives notice. Why should she put up with that sort of thing, she asks, when she can easily find another place? The other place is found, but presently the same thing happens

again, and again she gives notice. This time, however, another place is not so easily got, and she is brought to great straits before she finds one. And now she realizes that frequent changes are a serious matter, and she begins to think that, as she belongs to Christ, she has no right to leave a place at her own pleasure, without waiting for Him to open her way. So she makes up her mind that, by God's help, she will stay in the next place she gets, till it is quite plain that the Lord would have her change. And when she does get a place, it is ten times more trying than either of those she was in before. The Lord had seen her heart; He knew her purpose now to try and please Him and not herself; but He knew far more than she had ever suspected of the pride and selfwill that needed breaking down. So He has brought her to a special educational establishment, where day by day she may learn something of a Christian's high calling—to do well, to suffer for it, and to take

it patiently. But then, if the unkind mistress is the rod which the Lord has to use, the teaching is not all by the rod. Oh no! The Lord Himself, so good, so tender, so mighty, is her helper, and He is teaching her that those who are trying to please Him can count upon Himself for all their need. And how sweet, when the lesson has been well learned, to find that the Lord is able to remove the rod, and give joy in place of sorrow. Perhaps a dear child in the house, whom this sister had spoken to and prayed for, is brought to Christ. And then the mistress herself, who for some time has been compelled to own in her heart that there is something about Mary she cannot understand, begins to wonder what it means. "She never answers back," she says to herself, "though I know I am sharp with her at times; and certainly my little Amy is greatly improved since that night she had the long talk with Mary, and said she had trusted Jesus." And the mistress asks

Mary a question or two, which just gives the opportunity Mary had been praying for. The Lord has opened the door in answer to prayer, and presently that mistress is not a mistress only, but also a beloved sister. What joy fills Mary's heart now, as she thinks what she would have lost, if she had yielded to her natural inclinations, and given notice any one of the many times she was provoked. But do not let us forget that, apart from such blessed results of patient doing the will of God, God Himself is well pleased when we suffer for doing well, and yet bear it patiently. If we have not this before our hearts, we are sure to break down. The Lord Jesus is the perfect pattern in this, as in everything else. "When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. ii. 23). There was the secret of His patience. He believed in God, and knew that He

would judge righteously. That was more to Him than present results. Though He had to exclaim: "I have laboured in vain; I have spent My strength for naught;" He could add, "Yet surely My judgment is with the Lord, and My work with My God" (Is. xlix. 4). And this is just as much the privilege of each of us. "For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps" (1 Pet. ii. 21).

—:o:—

Look not at the quantity, but the quality of your service, whatsoever that service may be. If it be preaching, preaching is not the first thing. The heart must first be kept. Then two or three words spoken in the power of the Spirit may avail more than many a long discourse. The Judgment will try our work of what *sort* it is, not of what *quantity* it is. Therefore, keep the heart with all diligence; and however little our service may be, let it be done as unto the Lord.

**“HIDE NOT THY FACE
FROM ME.”**

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS.

“**H**EAR my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my supplications: in Thy faithfulness answer me, and in Thy righteousness. . . . I stretch forth my hands unto Thee: my soul thirsteth after Thee as a thirsty land” (Psa. cxliii. 1-6). This is the beginning of all blessing, the soul thirsting after God. In the book of Judges we see how often Israel departed from God, and the many times that He raised up deliverers for them. But the beginning of blessing to them was when their souls longed after God. They knew that when they had not Jehovah with them, they lacked everything that was good. “Hide not Thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit” (7th verse). Connect that with another scripture: “Unto Thee will I cry, O Lord, my rock; be not silent to

me: lest, if Thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit” (Psa. xxviii. 1).

The ungodly, the unconverted, are those who go down into the pit. God's children are not to be like them. Would it have ever struck us to put these two things together: “Be not silent to me, lest I be like those that go down into the pit”; or, as in the other passage: “Hide not Thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit?” Here we have two things that distinguish the godly from the ungodly. The godly man hears the voice of God; God is not silent unto him. The godly man beholds the countenance of God in Christ, and he rejoices in the light of His countenance. O, what a thought! The world *never hears the voice of God, and never sees His face.* It is God's grace alone that makes us to differ from the world in this respect. Have some of us not had the experience of God being a silent God to us? We have opened His word and read it, but

we have not heard Him speak to us. We have sat in the meeting and heard an address, but we did not hear the voice of God speaking to our hearts. How often have we broken the bread and drunk the wine in remembrance of the Lord, and yet have not realised His presence, or received any blessing to our souls? We have not seen the Lord, nor rejoiced before Him. What is the cause of this? In many instances it is because we have gone to the meeting with unjudged sin on our conscience; we have been living carnally throughout the week, and conformed to the ways of the world. The Bridegroom says to the Bride in S.S. ii. 14: "Let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely."

When we draw near to God in prayer, and pour out our hearts before Him, we show Him our countenance, and this makes Him glad. And as we speak to Him in loving confidence and faith, He also speaks to us, and causes His

face to shine upon us, and thus makes us glad. When such blessed communion goes on between our souls and God, we shall not be like those that go down into the pit. We may be very zealous for the truth, but if our souls are not in communion with God, our testimony will have no effect for good upon the world; it will be as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, and will only bring the truth into discredit. Turn again to Psa. cxliii.: "Cause me to hear Thy loving-kindness in the morning; for in Thee do I trust" (verse 8). There is the starting place for the day; bowed down before our God, and hearing His loving-kindness. I am unable to meet temptation, or endure the burden and heat of the day, unless I have been first before God, listening to His loving-kindness. Our souls need to be embedded in the love of God; rooted and grounded in love. This is a prayer indited by the Spirit of God. I do not believe in human forms of prayer—but I do believe

in God's forms of prayer—they are very precious. May the Lord lead us into closer and more blessed fellowship with Himself, so that, through His grace, we may witness joyfully for Him, which we can only do as we ourselves joy in God.

WORSHIP AND SERVICE.

WORSHIP is one thing, and service is quite another thing. As worshippers, we are on an equality with one another, all, as priests, being alike privileged to offer "the sacrifice of praise." But, as servants, we present a picture of almost infinite variety. The Lord has set the members in the body as it has pleased Him. One brother may be fitted to take the platform, while another would be quite out of his place there. The Word of God gives no countenance to the idea that we are all alike as His serving ones. We are convinced that much more real work for God would be accomplished, if the church sat down, as in God's presence, to ask the question: "Whom has God called and fitted for this work?" Anybody will not do. It is God's men we want; and then the chariot will run smoothly.

A NEW MEETING.

IN several places lately, we have noticed a desire on the part of some for a 'new meeting;' and as the subject is of immense importance, we would seek help of God to make a few observations regarding it. Firstly, then, should we not carefully examine the motives which give rise to the desire? Otherwise schism may be fostered, and a want of godly unity exhibited to fellow-saints and to the world. If, because of a hall being too small, or inconveniently situated for many, there is a desire for a second meeting, we can see no possible objection to such a course. Indeed, gift is often crippled, and much aggressive work for the Lord hindered, because there is neither time nor opportunity for many in the assembly possessed alike of a measure of gift and grace. But if the reasons for separating be of a different character from those referred to, such a course cannot be pleasing to God, or receive the approval of our beloved Master.

There is, we fear, a growing tendency to begin fresh meetings simply because brethren cannot agree together; while, at the same time, such beg that it may be understood as no breach of fellowship, "It is simply another meeting." Frequently, alas, though this is said, it is really the fruit of self-will, and a fleshly determination to free themselves from the necessity for forbearance with those who do not see with them. Thus the saints of God, ignorant of the devices of Satan, separate from their brethren, form themselves into sections, and presently, unless God comes to our aid, believers will be found going to that particular clique, which accords with their personal views and wishes. Surely this is nothing else than a stratagem of Satan's to undermine divine fellowship, and overturn the foundations of a Spirit-formed unity. Observance of New Testament ordinances, etc., will ever be seen in every God-constituted fellowship; but, on the other hand, they may exist as mere forms, the result of imitation and human

intelligence. What need can there be for grace and forbearance one with another, in a circle where the bond of fellowship practically consists of mere human agreement? Thus one of the most beautiful of Christian graces is repudiated, and the prayer of Christ that we might be *one*, frustrated.

In conclusion, it is our duty, and should be our delight, to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We are under no obligation either to remain in, or to strengthen that fellowship which is not the creation of the Spirit of God, or which has through continuous acts of departure from Scripture forfeited its claim to be regarded as an assembly. But let us take care lest we be in reality schismatic and fleshly under the specious pretext of owning the Lordship of Christ.

—:o:—

MUCH self-judgment makes a man slow to judge others; and the very gentleness of such an one gives a keen edge to his rebukes.

"TO PROVOKE UNTO LOVE."

HEB. x. 24.

THE apostle does not mean here that we are to provoke others to love and good works; but to consider them, their needs, their weaknesses, their trials, till our hearts are provoked unto love towards them. You pass twenty children in the street without noticing them, but when you see one crying piteously you cannot but stop to ask what is the matter. And the greater the need, the more you are stirred up to help. A little child falls in the track of the tram lines just as a car is coming quickly along. In a moment you dart forward and snatch the little thing out of the way of danger. The consideration of its great need provoked you to love and good works. If we considered each other in this way, what opportunities should we not find for lowly, loving service? God grant us each one

"A heart at leisure from itself
To soothe and sympathise."

"IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS."

HOW slow many of God's children are to remember that confession must come before restoration. And what loss they suffer in consequence. We know a little fellow not much more than three years old, who has helped to teach us a useful lesson. Sometimes when he has been naughty, his father puts him in the corner; but scarcely has his father sat down, when the little fellow comes running to him, saying "Father, me's sorry." What can his father do but take him in his arms and kiss him? Some children will sulk for half-an-hour before they will say they are sorry, and oh! how miserable they are all the time. But are God's children less wretched, when they refuse to confess their sins? Oh no. How many can recall an experience, like David's "When I kept silence my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long." But David could tell of forgiveness following promptly upon confession; and God is still faithful to His own word of promise.

DEC., 1885.

THE BELIEVER'S PATHWAY.

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—:o:—

LET us be pilgrims not by constraint, but by a loving choice.

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